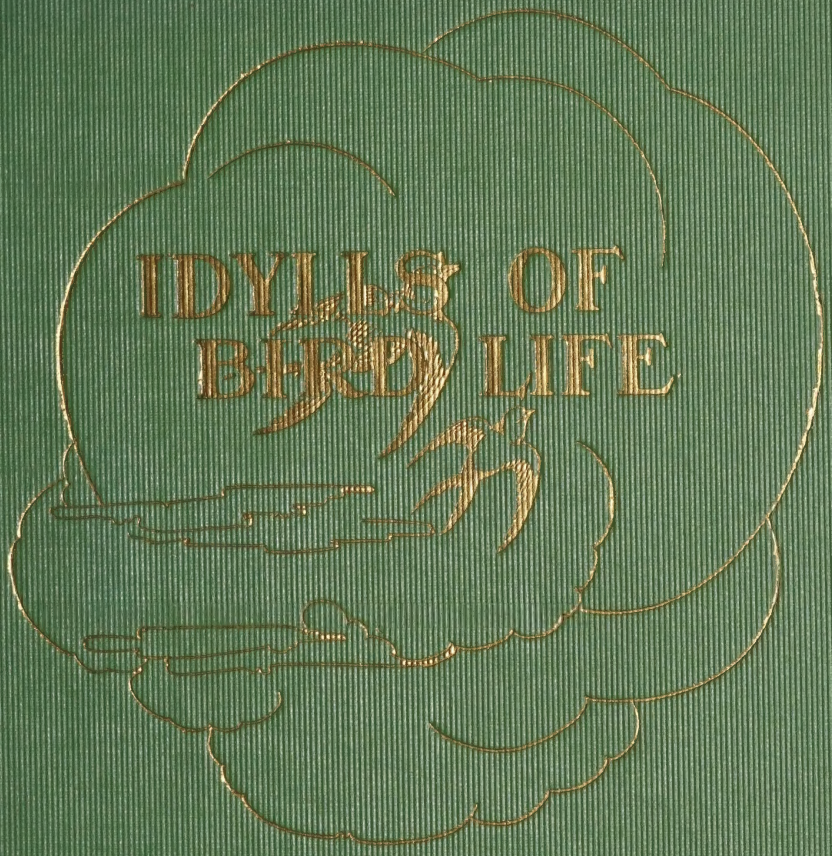
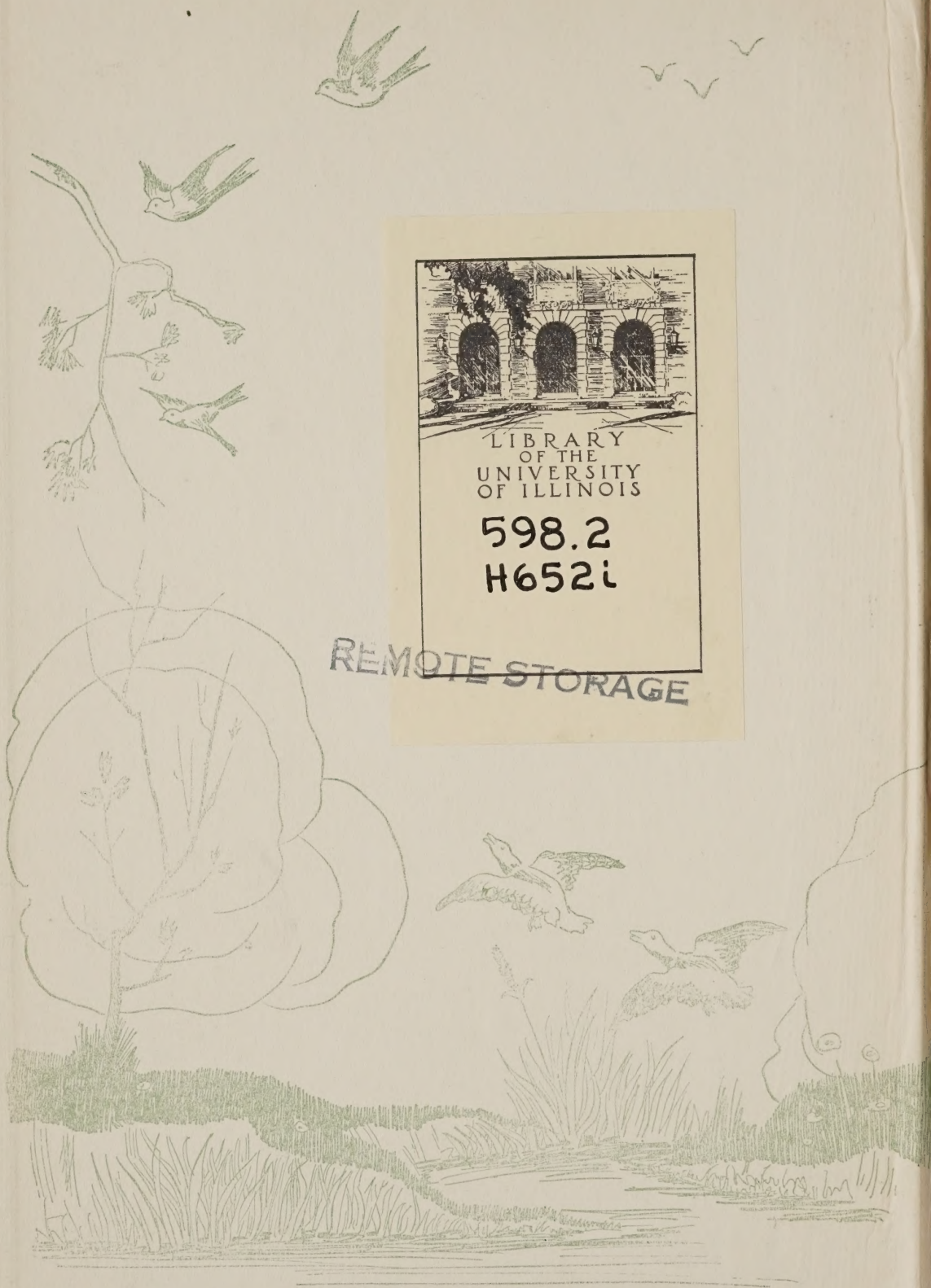
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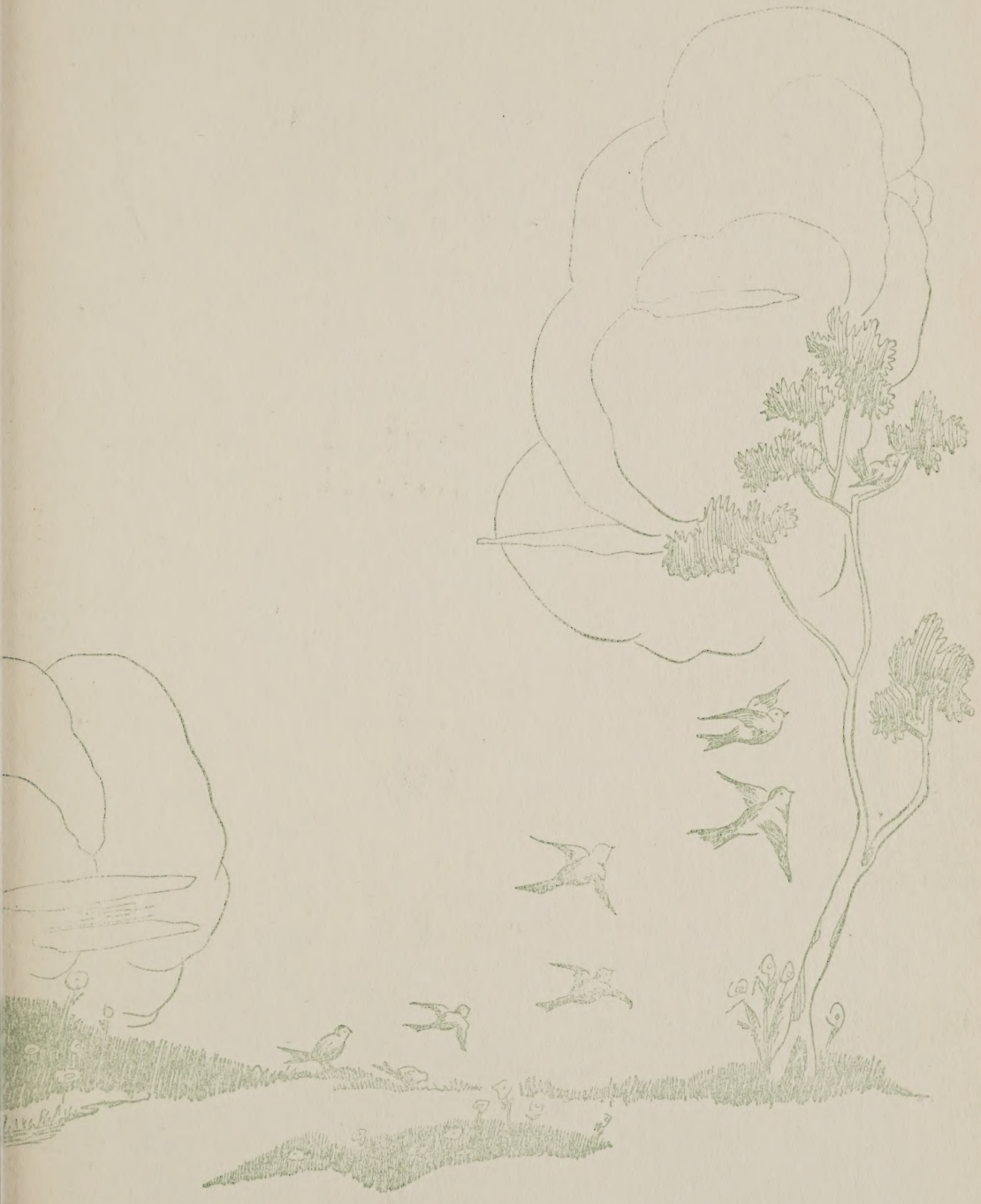


BY

BERT G. HOCHWALT

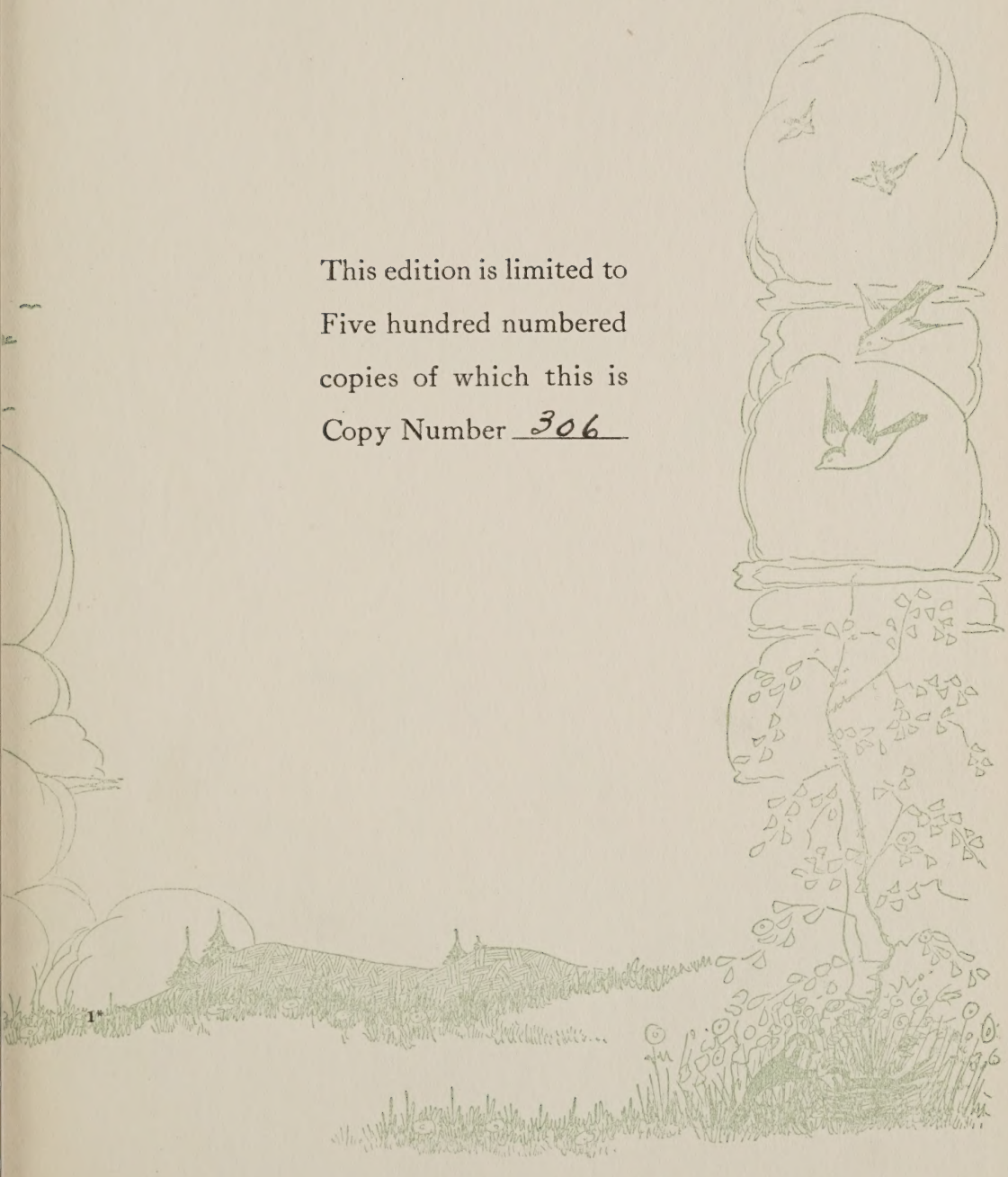


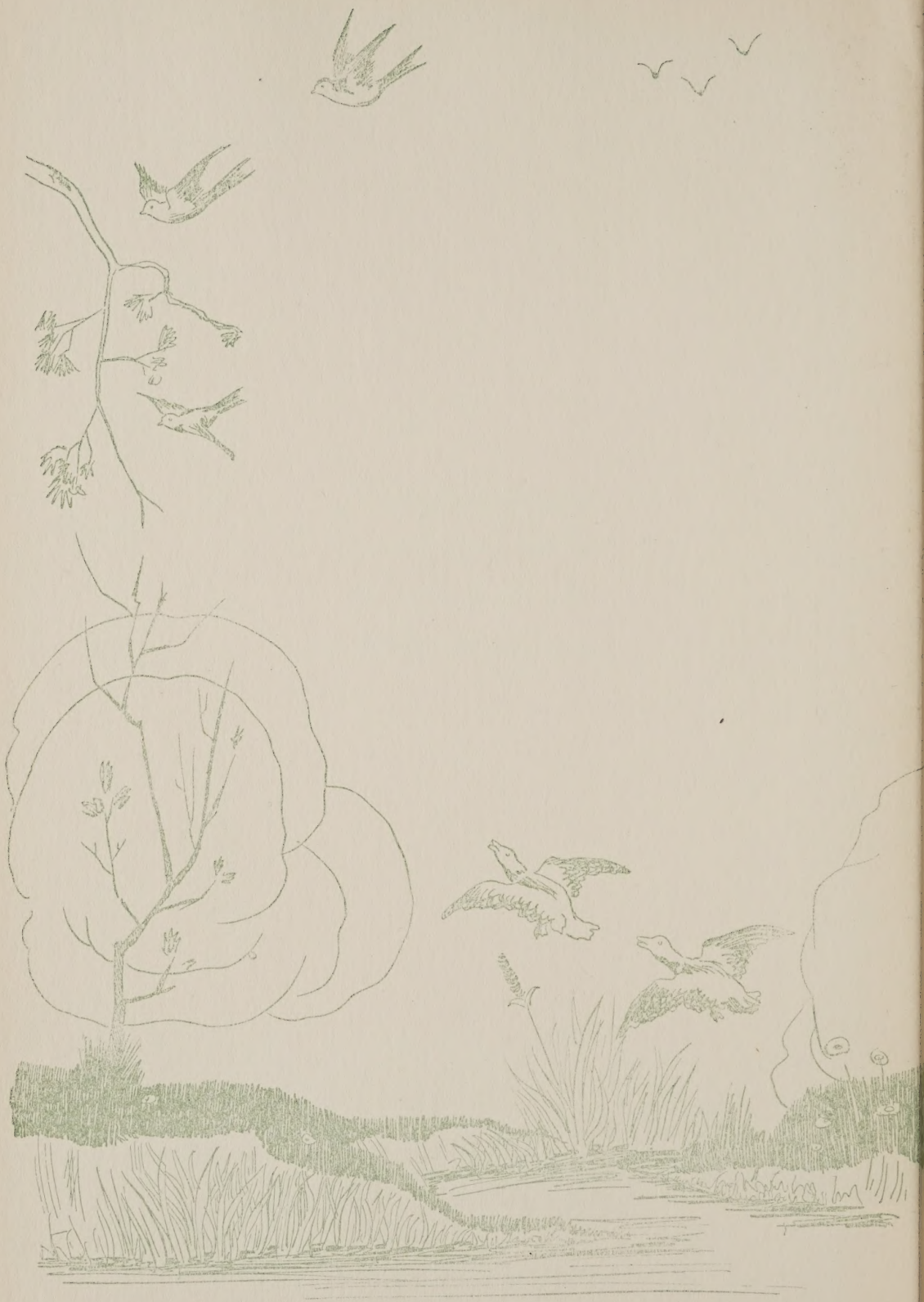
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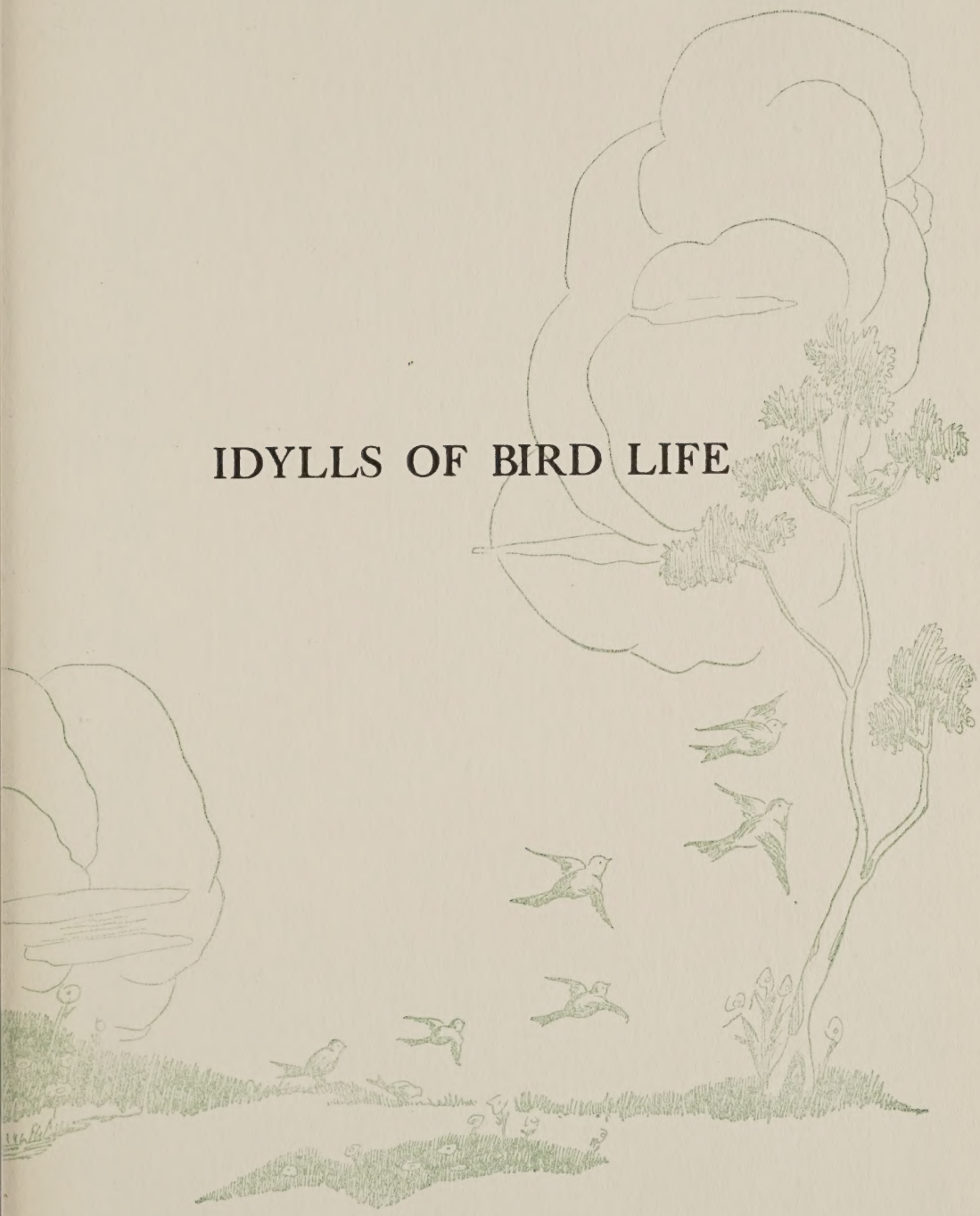


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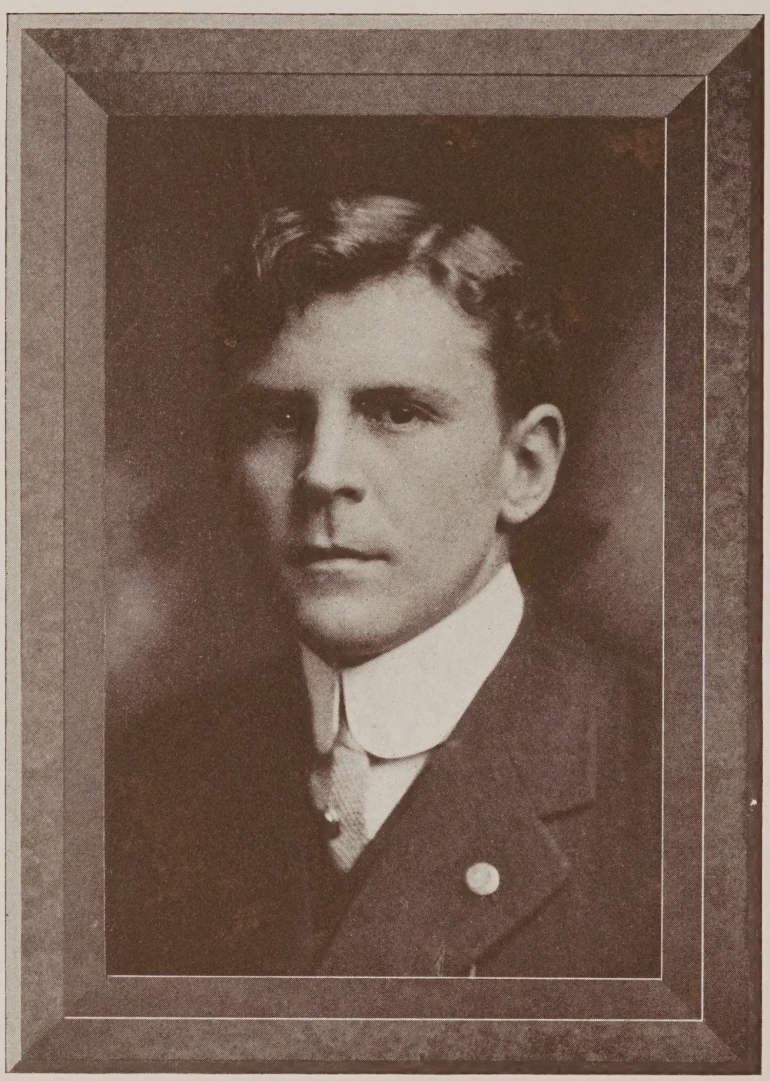




IDYLLS OF BIRD LIFE







Burt G. Hochwalt

Idylls of Bird Life

Bird and Nature Essays

BY

BERT G. HOCHWALT

EDITED BY

PRAXIDES BLANDFORD HOCHWALT

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY

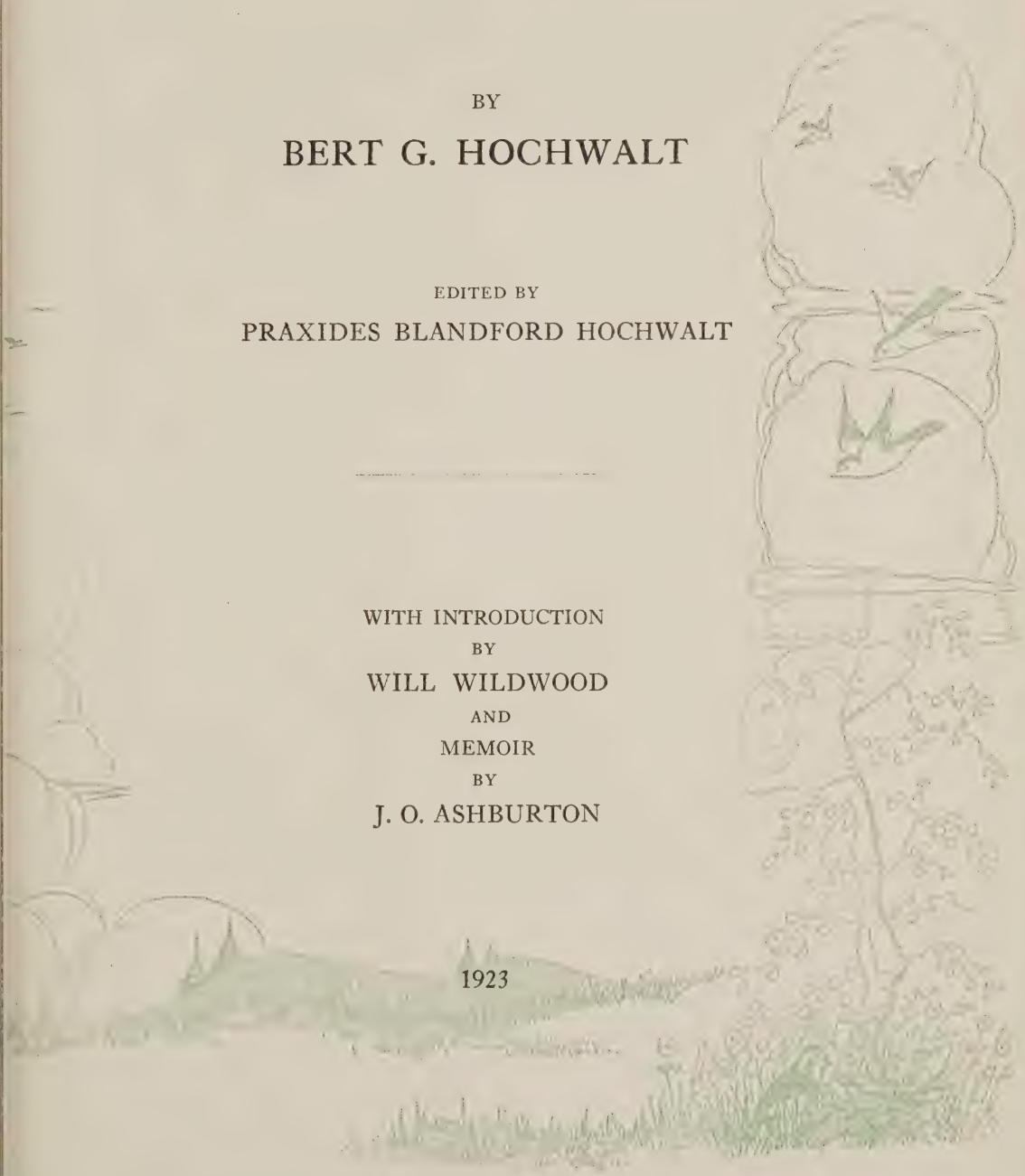
WILL WILDWOOD

AND

MEMOIR

BY

J. O. ASHBURTON



1923



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1923

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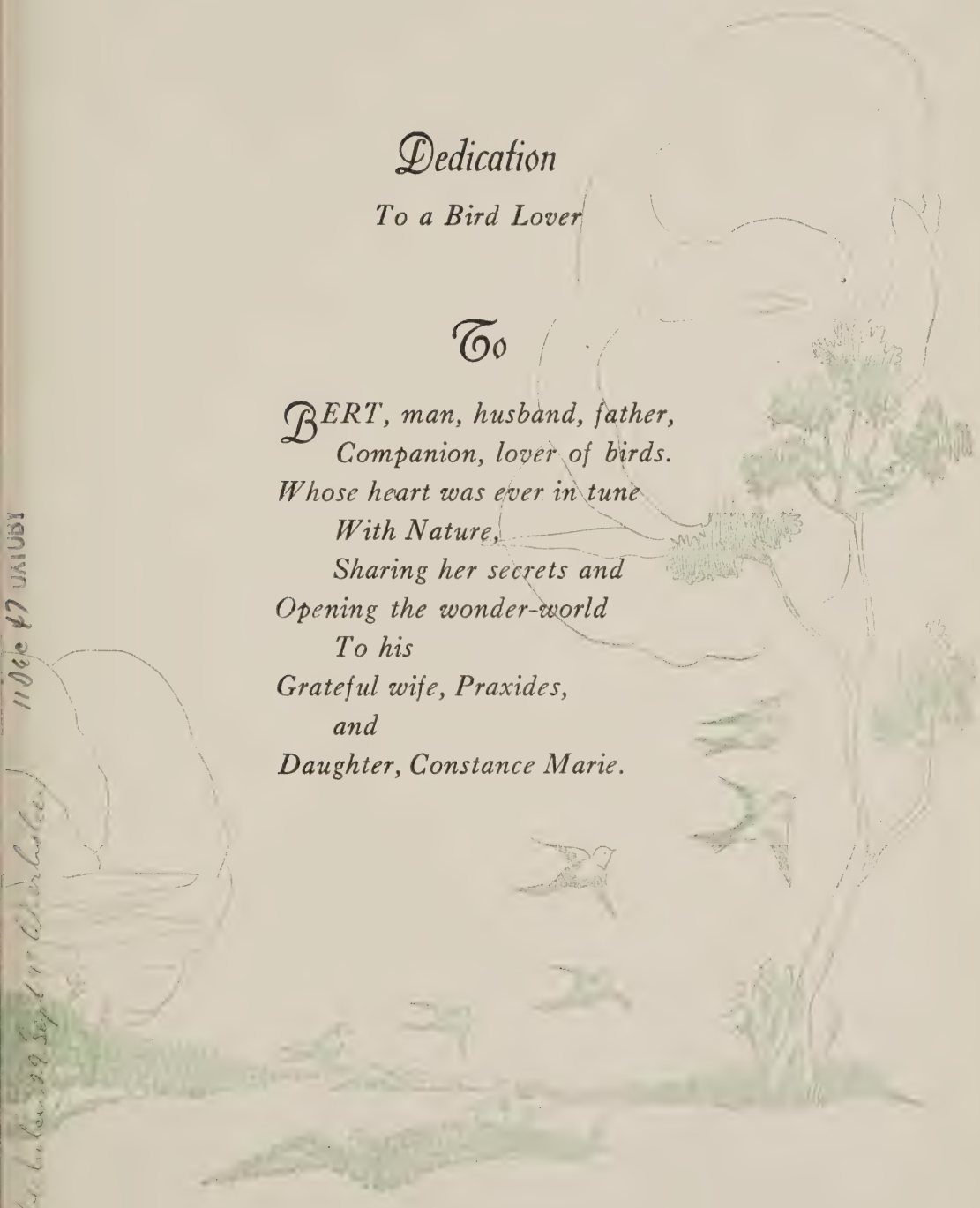
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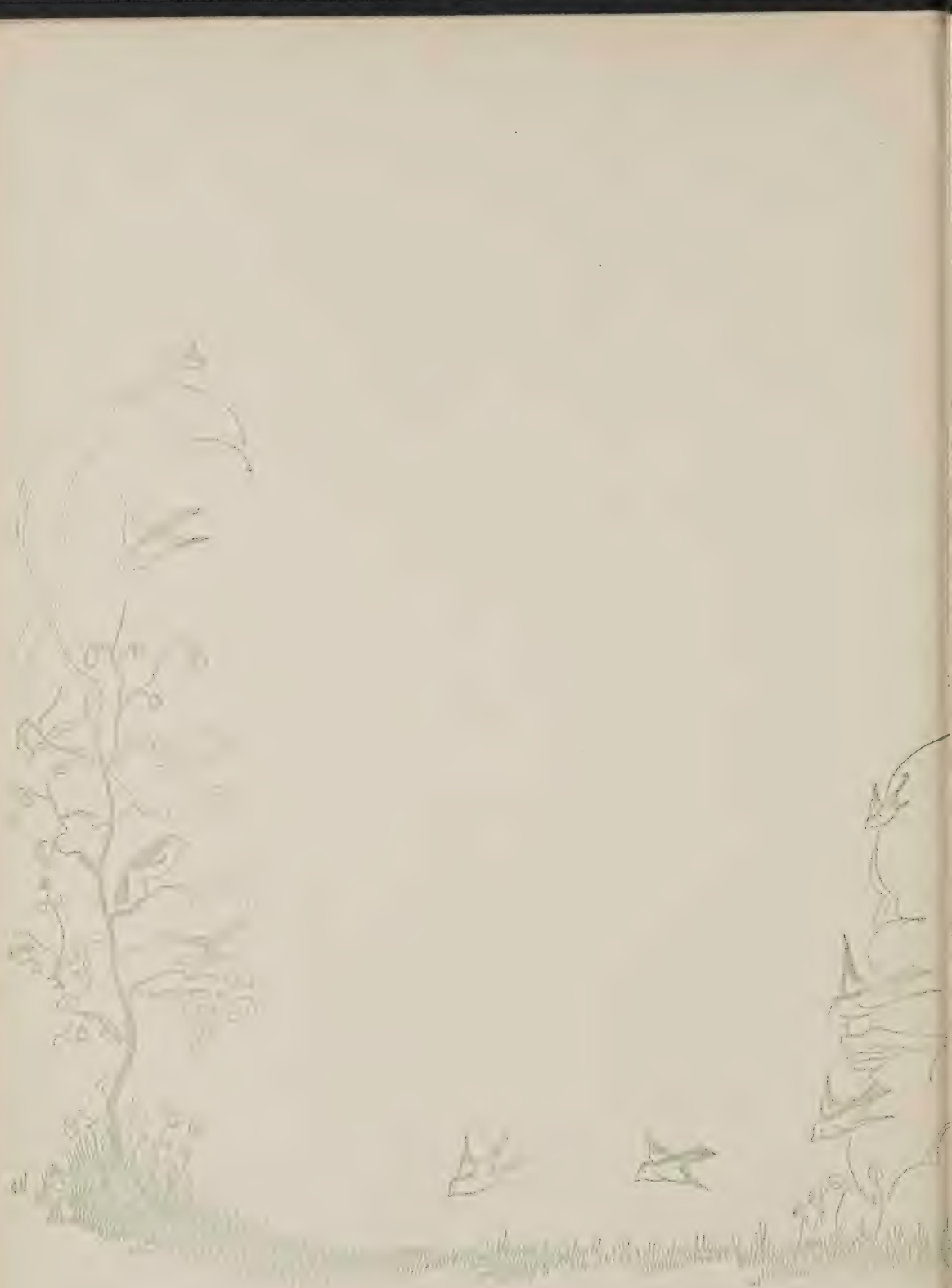
Dedication

To a Bird Lover

To

BERT, man, husband, father,
Companion, lover of birds.
Whose heart was ever in tune
With Nature,
Sharing her secrets and
Opening the wonder-world
To his
Grateful wife, Praxides,
and
Daughter, Constance Marie.





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FOREWORD

THIS collection of Nature-essays now presented to the reading public, is not a scientific treatise, but the plain notes and impressions of an amateur bird-lover. The young spirit that has since passed away, endeavors to have us take an interest in bird life.

There exists, in fact, a three-fold interest in this subject: the æsthetic, the intellectual and the cultural. The appeal that the color, the sound and the flight of birds makes, enriches our sense of the beautiful. The study of the kinds of birds, their manners and habits, and their relations to us are interesting and useful subjects for the mind's attention, and the storehouse of our knowledge. Furthermore, any subject that can help us wing our flight heavenward, has its cultural effect in taking us out of the materialism found in our daily lives. The consideration of Nature, and in particular the interest in bird life, unfolds to us the order of Providence, furnishing us with so many more pathways to the Creator.

The purpose of editing the present collection of essays is not to offer this slight contribution to the literature of Nature study, but rather, as a tribute of love and gratitude to a com-

panion who loved Nature, and who inspired me with an interest in the feathery kingdom. May this offering show the way to others and present new visions of refinement!

The essays have been arranged according to the seasons. This order seems to be the natural way, even though the divisions are not balanced in number, owing to the untimely death of the author.

I wish to thank the editors of *The Sportsmen's Review* and of *Birds and Nature* for the permission to publish several essays in this collection.

I am very grateful for the aid which my friends have given in the various stages of the publication.

PRAXIDES BLANDFORD HOCHWALT.

March 21, 1923.

INTRODUCTION

By Will Wildwood
(fred e. pond)

IN the brief span of an ideal life of rare promise — closing when he had but reached the early prime of manhood — Bert Hochwalt had given evidence of natural talent as a writer on outdoor recreation, showing a spirit of keen enthusiasm, and a knowledge of birds, gained through habits of close observation, which combined to make his essays remarkably entertaining and instructive.

The many friends whose good fortune it was to know him intimately, found charm and inspiration in his companionship. Holding high ideals, seeking field and forest for study of bird life and all the animate life therein, he had the enthusiasm of a young Audubon, and a chat or a stroll with Bert Hochwalt was a delight to his associates. Manly, in the true sense of the word, there was in him a spirit of chivalry, a determination to do justice to all; in fact, he was one "in whose brave spirit Nature fused the tenderness of woman."

Although fond of healthful open-air recreations, particularly those of the fields and woods, he loved the pursuits of

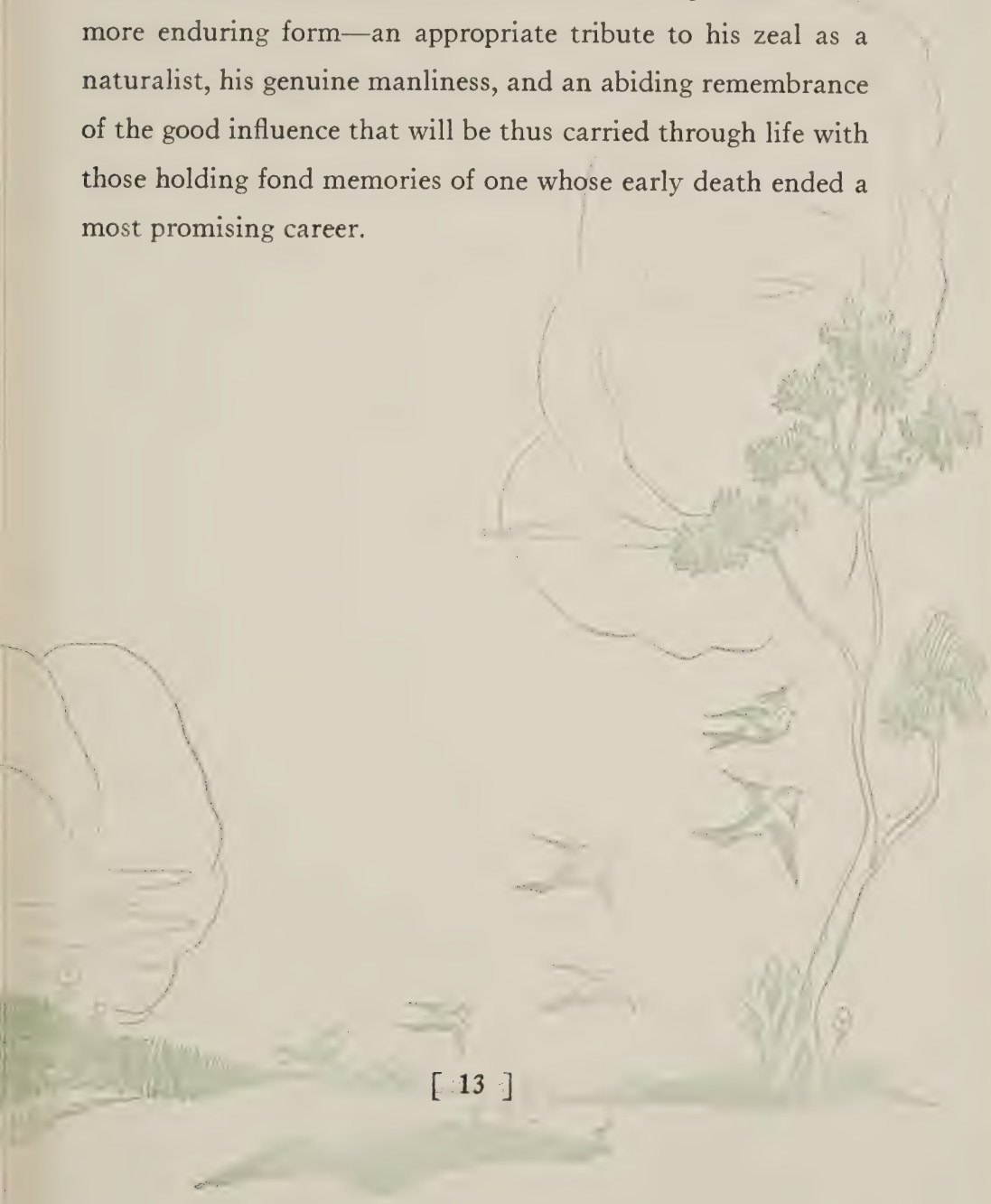
the naturalist to an even greater degree than those of the sportsman — as clearly demonstrated in his writings. His descriptions of the haunts and habits of favorite song and game birds are real pen pictures. Every season of the year had charm for him, and his impressions of scenes and places are given in graphic style, stimulating in the reader a desire for Nature study.

There is an object lesson, pleasantly given, in each of the essays in this volume, and I venture to mention especially "The Romance of Mr. and Mrs. Bob White," as a classic conveying an ideal worthy of preservation in the minds and hearts of all sportsmen whose cherished recreation is with dog and gun afield in pursuit of the game birds mentioned. Therein is inspiration for a sportsman-naturalist.

Avoiding the technical phrase and coldly scientific method of many writers on ornithology, Bert Hochwalt's charming chapters relating his experiences among birds seem to take the reader along with him in his rambles to enjoy companionship with the birds — songsters and feathered friends of the game bird species.

Many sportsmen and Nature lovers who have read and admired — as a writer of this brief commentary — the delightful

sketches from Bert Hochwalt's pen at the time of their publication, several years ago, will appreciate the re-publication in more enduring form—an appropriate tribute to his zeal as a naturalist, his genuine manliness, and an abiding remembrance of the good influence that will be thus carried through life with those holding fond memories of one whose early death ended a most promising career.





MEMOIR

"There was a boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake."

William Wordsworth.

TO the subject of this biographical sketch, could William Wordsworth have addressed his poem. From his childhood days there became manifest a great love for the out-of-doors. In his boyhood hours and short-lived manhood days, his predominant interest lay in the Kingdom of the Birds.

Albert G. Hochwalt was born at Dayton, Ohio, June 25, 1893. His parents were of families, well-known and highly respected in the community. The father, early associated with a group of literature-loving youth, was already at the birth of young Albert, a nature-writer and traveler. Despite the frequent absence, the parent's love of birds, became the child's possession. In addition to this early influence, the abiding interest of a devoted mother who lived for her children, manifested itself in that finer feeling and sense of delicacy that made up the soul of the boy-naturalist.

The child's father, Albert Frederick Hochwalt, whose name appears in almost every out-door magazine of the country, is an authority on animal life. He was, undoubtedly, the boy's first inspiration. Young Albert at the age of six, had already acquired a knowledge of birds, and could distinguish quite a number of them. The study of birds had been the senior Albert's hobby, but the son was to take a still greater interest. He was indeed, an apt nature student. In the pictures snapped, when the lad was ten years of age, his very pose was one of conscious quest for the birds in the trees.

Learning to read, he turned naturally to the subject that was already inspiring to his youthful mind. A collection of nature books became one of his early ambitions. He would read for hours, following his author-guide in the adventures which he was to duplicate in fact. Prolonged residence at Highwood farm along the Stillwater River gave him opportunity to gain in bird lore. Here, his first adventures were undertaken in the woods and along the river bank. His library was a treasure trove for him. The books were well thumbed. Upon his return from every adventure in birddom, he would hasten to the authorities on the subject and seek new light, or a solution to a new problem that baffled him.

Young Albert had the ideal company of three younger brothers who early learned to appreciate their big brother's interest in birds. No better companion could these boys find, than their father. He was playmate, instructor, guide and father to the growing lads, and they responded whole-heartedly to the moulding influences of the paternal parent. The eldest son, however, was to resemble most the father in literary talent and love of Nature. Young Albert's teachers in the elementary classes recall his interest in the collection of insects and love for observation. Here, he was already an interesting companion, manifesting an advanced knowledge in the denizens of the woods.

He attended the High School of the University of Dayton, from 1907-1911. During the time of his high school career, a love for flowers manifested itself. His interest in Nature quickened. Though at all times a good sportsman and a real American boy, with his interest in baseball, basketball, lawn tennis, a study of Nature at unlooked-for moments would hold his attention. Because of this predominating interest some of his classmates facetiously termed him "caveman." For want of a better name this word signified the embryo naturalist. In his second year of High School at the age of fifteen, he wrote his

first Nature story. In the early winter of 1908 he spent a few days on the farm, "Highwood." Upon his return home he penned his observations and submitted the article for publication. It was accepted by the *Sportsmen's Review* and appeared in the January, 1909, issue under the title: "A Winter's Walk in Highwood." The die was cast. Bert, as young Albert was called, now resolved to observe Nature even more and to interpret the beauty thereof to all who would listen.

His interest in walks increased, and many a companion unlearned in the beauties of Nature followed at first unwillingly, but returned with the deep interest of a convert, in the glory of creation and eyes opened to new visions of Nature's miracles. Notes taken on his observation-walks now took form and in 1910, at the age of sixteen, he wrote the essay: "Birdlife in Spring." It was published in the *Sportsmen's Review* of the same year.

Bert G. Hochwalt finished High School in 1911 and entered the office of one of the public utilities of his native city, Dayton, Ohio. His days were spent in industrious work at the desk; but the love for the out-of-doors never deserted him. Every half-holiday and Sunday, along with the big vacations, he shook the city's dust to roam in the woods or to paddle his canoe; but,

all the while with that spirit of observation, that learned how to linger when fainter hearts grew weary. In 1914 he wrote, as a result of his observations, and at the request of Fred E. Pond (Will Wildwood), the article: "The Romance of Mister and Mistress Bob White." This charming essay appeared in the holiday number of the *Sportsmen's Review*. In the same issue appeared the article: "Our Feathered Winter Residents." The following year saw the publication of "The Robin's Menu," in the April issue of the *Sportsmen's Review*. A year after he wrote, "The Blue Bird's Repast," and "The Robin, an Insect Destroyer." Besides showing the romance of bird-life, our youthful author could not lose sight of the practical value.

To his filial affection for his parents and his admiration for the out-doors, a new love now entered his life. He wrote of romances, but he, too, was the hero of a charming romance with his lady-love. On the first day of the most beautiful month of May, 1917, Bert G. Hochwalt was married to Miss Praxides Marie Blandford. This charming young lady appreciated the tastes of the young benedict, and was his most appreciative companion in his out-door studies. His great love for Nature was not to diminish; it was to be enhanced by the greater love, for the companion of his too short a life.

Many had been the walks in the days of his courtship, but now they were to be more frequent.

During the long vacation he left the city, and with his young wife dwelt along the Miami in their little cabin, "Justamere Shack." In these happy days of carefree hours, he could indulge to his heart's content in his wanderings among the bird haunts of these shores. His cheery invitation, in tones ecstatic, called to come and see the glories of bird-land, never left him go alone. There was always a companion. To the uninitiated, however, there was the first remonstrance, "Do not scare the birds," and the second one, "Can't you see?"

His writing now kept pace with his notes. Among the beautiful and ideal surroundings of "Justamere Shack" he prepared the essay: "Rambles of a Bird-Lover." The walks that he took on the autumnal days of 1918 inspired the beautiful word-painting: "Autumn."

A little fairy appeared at his home during this year. The little visitor was Miss Constance Marie Hochwalt. The father's heart rejoiced and a still greater sympathy was manifested for the singing life in the forest.

A reserved interest in the habits of the owl family led him to revise his notes of 1916 and to publish the study, entitled:

"Old Head Hunter." It appeared in the magazine, "Birds and Nature," of 1918.

On May 30, Decoration Day, of 1919, he attended the last family reunion at "Justamere Shack," his ideal haunt for bird-lore. Sure to leave the crowd, he returned to the wondering party with the invitation, "Let me show you a new bird-nest." Bert Hochwalt was not unsociable, but he would be certain to go to his favorites, the birds, and share with them the time of his recreations.

The year 1919 promised to be one of unusual literary activity for the young author, who was now assured of readers. He was invited by a Nature Magazine to write a bird article each month. The notes and souvenirs of his walks were brought out from the desk and there evolved the following studies:

"Home Building in the Bog,"
"The Domestic Affairs of the Sora Rails,"
"Bob Whites at Home,"
"The Mallard's Rendezvous,"
"Afield in October."

Here was more than promise, but the Lord of Nature loved that soul attuned to His Creation.

In July, 1919, commenced a siege of illness which developed into a wasting affliction that finally took him from this earth in March, 1920.

At one time during his illness a change of climate was sought to give him a fighting chance. At first he refused to take the proffered opportunity, for he could not leave his wife and child. "I'd rather be home with you," was his justification.

But even here, his love for his birds and the trees and flowers did not dampen. They brought him daily courage to fight his losing battle. He appreciated his flower-laden apartment and noticed the birds whose music penetrated his room.

A beautiful coincidence occurred in this last illness. All the winter of nineteen hundred and nineteen, two birds were frequent, if not daily visitors at his residence on Forest Avenue. In the garden adjoining the house two robins with white stripes on their backs came up to the very window of their sympathetic brother.

In a final attempt to bring about a cure, the father induced the son to accompany him on a trip South. He seemed to rally, but his return home hurried the final summons to a new life. His last words were uttered when someone asked the name of

the bird now singing. The bird-lover answered: "The Cardinal."

Here was the passing of a great soul. Twenty-seven years old, on the eve of real authorship, he was called to an eternal life. His essays must not be read as if a series of technical studies, but as the true, yet romantic quest of the bird's troubadour.

J. O. Ashburton.

A FEW OF THE BIRD FAMILY

The Old Bob White, and chipbird;
 The flicker and chee-wink,
And little hopty-skip bird
 Along the river brink.

The blackbird and snowbird,
 The chicken-hawk and crane;
The glossy old black crowbird;
 And buzzard down the lane.

The yellowbird and redbird,
 The tom-tit and the cat;
The thrush and that redhead bird
 The rest's all pickin's at!

The jay-bird and the bluebird,
 The sap-suck and the wren—
The cockadoodle-doo bird,
 And our old settin' hen!

James Whitcomb Riley.

SPRINGTIDE

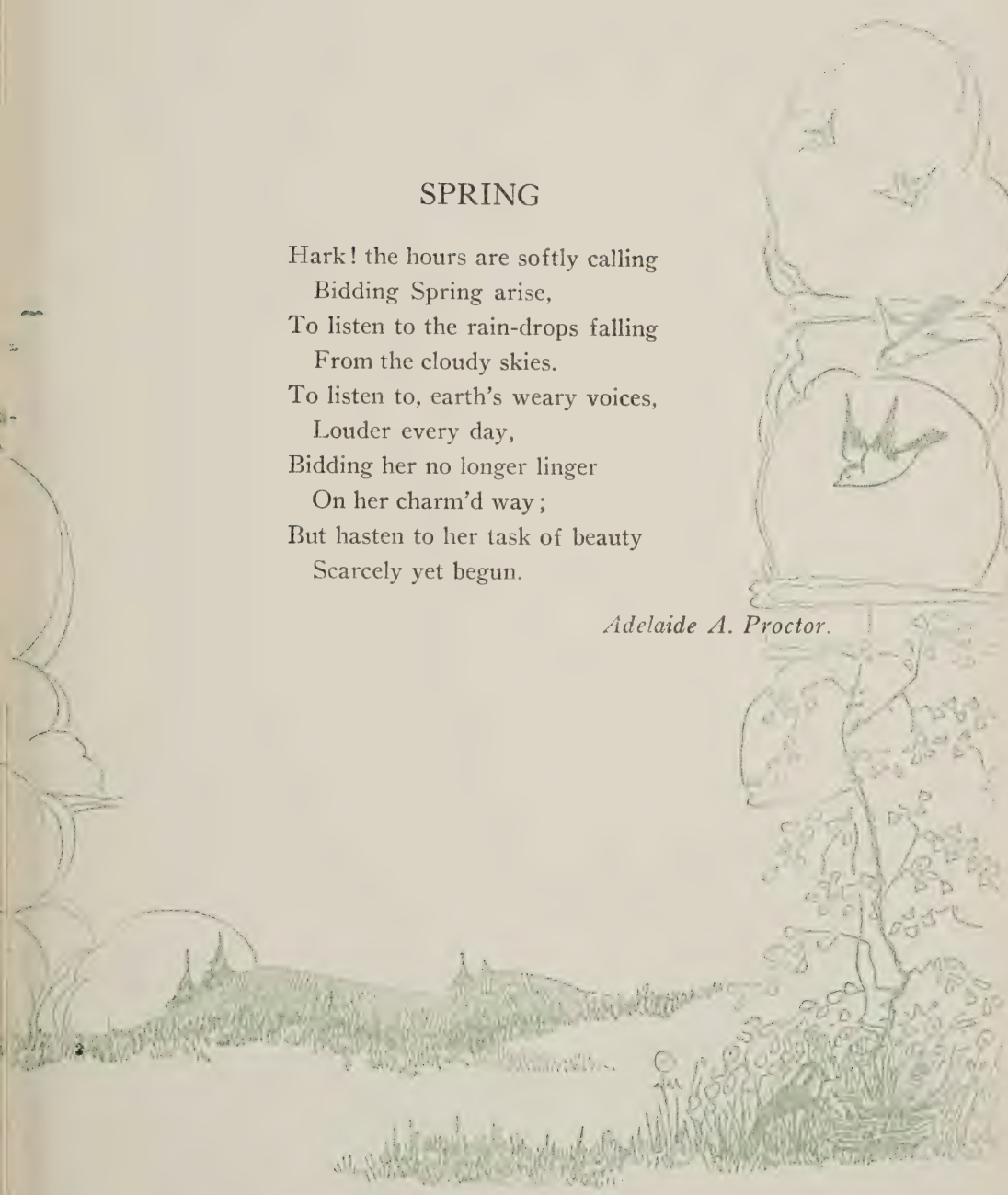




SPRING

Hark! the hours are softly calling
 Bidding Spring arise,
To listen to the rain-drops falling
 From the cloudy skies.
To listen to, earth's weary voices,
 Louder every day,
Bidding her no longer linger
 On her charm'd way;
But hasten to her task of beauty
 Scarcely yet begun.

Adelaide A. Proctor.





BIRD LIFE IN SPRING

"Hear how the birds on ev'ry blooming spray,
With joyous music wake the dawning day."

Alexander Pope.

AS the last dreary days of Winter pass and the early ones of balmy Spring appear, the first feathered songsters begin to arrive from the Sunny South. Everything in Nature takes on a new lease of life, and everybody is joyous and light at heart. The fast returning birds fill sweet fragrant out-of-doors with their exquisite notes. Signs of rejuvenated Spring are seen everywhere. The naked trees of Winter take on a rich leafy covering, and the orchards are filled with the fragrant blossoms of the pear, apple and cherry trees. Before youthful Spring has fairly proceeded on its way, all of our feathered friends have arrived from their distant journeys. The orchards are alive with robins, catbirds, orioles, blue jays, bluebirds, wrens, cardinals and scores of other songsters too numerous to mention. As the weeks take on warmth and verdure these feathered neighbors begin their nesting season. It is concerning this moment in the bird's life, around which I shall weave my story.

One sunshiny afternoon, about the latter part of April, as I was coming home from school, I noticed a pair of blue jays

flitting about a tall elm that stood along the road. They were apparently seeking a suitable place for a nesting site. Soon their nest would contain two or three greenish-colored eggs. I noted the fact and marked the tree. For several days after, I saw nothing of my new friends, and I decided that they must have selected a more secluded place for their home. About a week after my discovery, I saw Mr. Jay carrying a twig, at about a quarter of a mile from the elm. As I walked along the road, noticing the rich display of Nature on every side of me, I happened to see that Mr. Jay had flown down toward the tree. I hastened along the macadamized road until I came to the spot, and there, sure enough, this restless bit of anatomy was busy constructing a rude nest, which, because of its high altitude, appeared to be of the same color as its surroundings. As soon as I made my appearance, and as long as I remained watching these busy marauders, they kept up a constant screaming, which seemed to me as if they were trying to tell me in blue-jay-language, to mind my own business.

For several weeks after I continued to watch the jays, and finally the mother took to the nest. As I passed day after day, Mr. Jay sat in a nearby oak, ready to defend his brooding mate

from the chance attacks of passing hawks or other bird enemies. I did not attempt to disturb these birds while they were brooding. One day as I passed, I saw the nest minus Mother Jay, and knowing that she had gone off to feed, I quickly climbed the tree, and with some difficulty succeeded in reaching the rude abode. There, on a soft lining of horsehair, probably gathered along the road, I saw the prettiest little eggs imaginable. They were three in number, and about as big as a robin's egg, greenish-yellow in color, sprinkled here and there with reddish-brown and dull lilac spots.

In due time three featherless jays sprang into existence, and they kept their parents busy filling the little hungry mouths. About four days after their entry into this world, I climbed up to their rough but secure home, and viewed the featherless, half-starved little fellows. Their eyes were still closed, and they thrust their tiny bodies about in a blind fashion.

Owing to our spring vacation, which occurred at this time, I did not have occasion to visit the jay family, after my second intrusion into their home. But when school resumed, about two weeks later, I saw two of the young jays perched on a limb above their home and ready to launch out into the cruel world

and shift for themselves. What had become of the other fellow? I cannot say, but I hope that some swooping hawk did not make a breakfast on its diminutive body. After this I necessarily severed my connections with my blue jay acquaintances.

* * * * *

It was on a warm afternoon, in the middle of May, during a lull in a hotly-contested tennis game, while resting with a number of companions in the cool shade of a row of sweet syringas that bordered the court, that I was attracted by hearing the rustle of leaves directly back of me and about five feet from the ground. Curious to know the nature of the commotion, I began an investigation, and after five or ten minutes, I was too excited to take the exact time, I found the ragged but well-made nest of a pair of catbirds. It was the "papa bird" who had disturbed me while he was busy feeding his modest little brown-eyed mate, who sat silently brooding over her nest, apparently undisturbed by this close proximity of danger.

As soon as I discovered this precious chance of studying the catbird and its habits, I lost all interest in the tennis game, although it was my serve, the score was forty love, and I had a

girl friend for my partner. We decided to quit the game for that afternoon, so as not to disturb the little brooding mother in the nearby bushes. The next morning, although Jupiter Pluvius had opened the flood gates of heaven and the rain was coming down in torrents, I visited my newly-discovered feathered friends. To my delight I found that the rain had left the nest untouched. Not to take any chances I hastily built a sort of shelter to protect the brooding bird. By noon the clouds shifted, and old Sol again smiled upon the earth. This same day was the last I saw of my catbird friends. All during the time the catbird's mate was brooding, his long, glorious song second only to that of the bell bird or woodthrush in exquisiteness of tone, was heard throughout the day. I did not get to see the five pretty dark green-blue eggs, as they had quickened before I discovered the pair. The mother bird scarcely left the nest, save to trim her glossy black and slatey-colored feathers early in the morning. Despite my early rising one morning at half past four, to get a peep at the contents of the nest, it appeared as if she had secured double trimming the day before, inasmuch as she remained brooding all day.

About ten days after my discovery, I saw, while strolling through the orchard back of the house, the mother bird busily

gathering food. At my approach she hastily flew in the direction of the syringa bushes, and I guessed that the young were out of the shell. When I reached the nest I found that I had guessed rightly. Five hungry little downy birds thrust their heads out of the nest. The mother bird had been there before my approach, and now the father appeared, and fearlessly entered the nest and gave his supply of food to the hungry birdlings. This industrious pair of little workers had more than they could take care of in supplying the babes. Occasionally I helped them along, by bringing berries and crumbs, and I soon won their entire confidence. In about ten days the young left the nest, and, as these neighborly birds are summer residents, we had the profound pleasure of listening to their sweet song through the long weeks of summer and autumn, until the migratory period took them southward.

* * * * *

An evening in early May, just as twilight was beginning to pervade the atmosphere, I was coming through an open woods, a short-cut from the city to my home, when I heard a clear, distinct song of a brown thrasher as he was bidding another day goodbye. The song that reached my ears came from

the wood to the left of me, and having plenty of time I determined to discover the possessor of that exquisite song. Carefully threading my way over the thick carpet of the last year's leaves, I had proceeded about a hundred feet, when I perceived the most beautiful brown thrasher of my birdy career. He was sitting on the topmost branch of a red haw, and his tail kept twitching and wagging about as if to help him express his emotions. As soon as he saw me, for I had unnecessarily exposed myself, he was off like a flash, and I knew that my chances for seeing him again that night were gone. About a week later, for it was now time for the thrasher to mate, I made a special trip to the woods to look for the nest which I thought must be there. I began by searching the low shrubs and bushes; being unsuccessful after two hours of hard work, and as it had grown dark, I gave up my search for that night, but not without hope of finding the thrasher's abode. Once I caught a fleeting glimpse of the male as he darted through the trees, and I searched about for an hour, but with no success. Night after night I continued the hunt, and at last, after a week of tedious work, I discovered in a low briar bush a rather bulky nest, made of twigs, bark, leaves, tendrils, roots, and lined with horse hair

and a few feathers. The mother bird must have been off feeding, as she was nowhere to be seen, and four bluish-white or greenish colored eggs, about the size of a robin's egg, were to be seen in the nest. I did not tarry long, but carefully marked the place and hurried away.

About a week later, I paid a visit to the thrashers, intent upon making a study of the young birds. I went straight to where I had marked the location of the nest, but I could not find it. Further searching failed to reveal their domicile, and I began an investigation of the nest. The thrashers' home had been in the center part of the bramble bush about three feet from the ground. I could see where some heavy body had pushed its way through the brambles to get to the nest. Next, I discovered footprints, and the prints being of medium size I concluded that some ignorant young "rube" who didn't have sense enough to know the value of a nest full of thrashers' eggs, had stolen them to add to his collection. I was angry with a righteous indignation. Had I caught the fellow, I do not care if he had been a six-footer, I would have proved to him that hereafter he had better leave his hands off the things that did not belong to him. I wended my way home, feeling sorry for the beautiful birds, whose home had been despoiled by some

thoughtless fellow. I reported the affair to a game warden, and I asked him to keep a sharp lookout for further depredations.

* * * * *

One of our commonest, and one of the most delightful of our summer birds, is the robin. A pair of them built their nest, consisting of mud and sticks plastered together and lined with grass, in a big maple that partly shades the veranda which extends about the front and two sides of our house. Early in April the glad "cheer up, dearie! cheer up, dearie, cheer up! cheer up!" of the pair could be heard. In due time the mother bird began to nest and brooded faithfully over four pale blue eggs. The cheerful red-breasted mate supplied her with grubs and insects, and later on berries and such table scraps as I always made it my business to prepare for them. The birds were very tame, and they would hop about the place, picking up food here and there, and very often fly up within a few feet of the kitchen door, to take the food they found there.

One day as I was sitting in the library reading of the trials and tribulations of Becky Sharp in Thackeray's Vanity Fair, I heard the loud, excited "kip! kip! kip!" of my robin friends, as if they were calling for me. I went out to learn the cause of the

excitement and saw a big black cat that belonged to one of the neighbors about to pounce upon poor mother robin, who was bravely defending her eggs. Hastily seizing a good-sized stone I hurled it at that cat. The throw was true, and I don't suppose he knew what struck him until about five minutes afterwards. As soon as he collected his wits he was off, and up to this day he has not disturbed a bird about our premises.

About the last of May the robins were hatched, and now was the busy time for the father and mother, who were kept at work early in the morning until late at night feeding the four hungry birdlets. The youngsters developed fast, and it seemed that the faster they grew the more they ate, until finally they had the poor parents working overtime; I also helped to feed them. In about eleven days the young birds were able to leave the nest, and then I saw them no more, as they generally take to the deep woods after the brooding season. The old birds, however, visited me almost every day, and ate the food I provided for them.

* * * * *

It was the third Sunday in May and a bright sunny afternoon when a crowd of boys and girls, myself included, decided

to go violet gathering. We took the one o'clock car out of town, and arrived at our destination, a beautiful spot, an hour later. We knew where these dainty blossoms were very plentiful, and here we hastened our youthful steps. Soon we were reveling in the midst of a patch of blue violets, which seemed almost an acre in extent. We were coming over from the car when I heard the plaintive whistle of a quail in the nearby stubble. It was the nesting season of the quail or Bob White. I slipped away from the crowd, lost all interest in the violet expedition, and hastened toward the stubble from whence I heard the call. I jumped an old snake fence, the abode of thousands of insects, and skirted it down to where I heard the call. Here a tiny babbling brook threaded its silver course and was lost in the woods beyond. I carried a stout stick, which I used to poke with among the grasses. Directly across the brook in a spot shaded by a giant hickory, a whir reached my ears, and I saw a quail go whirling through the trees. Then it did not take me long to find the nest, which was on the ground in a corner of the fence, roughly arched, and made of grasses, leaves, wood, weeds and straw, carelessly put together. This loosely compiled nest contained sixteen of the most beautiful pure white eggs, about a day old, and I became elated over my find. I again marked the place,

but this time I confidently hoped to find the nest safe when I came back. Then I rejoined the bunch, and had to answer a thousand and one questions regarding my new feathered friends.

We continued picking the small blue beauties and were so absorbed in our task that we did not think of the hour until the slanting rays of the sun lighting up the edge of the meadow and tinting the trees in the distance with a dull gold, warned us that it was time "to fold up our tents like the Arabs, and steal away." I reached home that night just as soft evening gently and slowly stole over the world, and silently, one by one, the stars began dotting the heavens.

I did not visit the quail nest until about two weeks after my discovery. As it takes about twenty-four days, however, to hatch a brood, both birds assisting in the incubation, I decided to make another journey to the place. I finally found the opportunity. When I reached their home, the mother bird was silently brooding, and her eggs must have quickened, as she was not inclined to flight as is usually the case, and so I did not disturb her. To show that I was her friend I distributed some crumbs about the nest. After this, every two days I visited them, and when I came, sometimes the male, and sometimes the

female was present. In about ten days' time the brood was hatched. The little downy Bob Whites, comical to behold, followed their parents about the ground, learning from both of them which berries, seeds and grasses they might eat. As I was watching them one day the mother bird uttered a shrill "wee teek" and instantly the whole bevy, as a flock is called in sportsman's parlance, ran to the protecting wings of their mother. About a week later I again visited the nest. This time the birds were nowhere to be seen; they had probably located in the woods hard by, as the weather was unusually warm for this time of the year.

* * * * *

One evening while returning from a visit to my quail friends, I heard the rich, mellow "cheo! cheo! cheo!" of a cardinal in a willow that overhung the river. I followed the course of the stream about a mile. The surrounding country was a typical place for red birds and I heard no less than four of these sweet songsters during that whole glorious ride. I did not stop to investigate the haunts of this American nightingale, as it was late in the evening, and I had to hurry home. The next day being Saturday, and I arose just as the first gray streaks

of dawn began to brighten the western horizon, intent upon getting acquainted with the possessor of that sweet song I had heard the night before.

I was well on my way of exploration before the rosy-hued horizon overtook me. After an hour's steady walking I heard a faint "cheo! cheo! cheo!" sounding. I took my rifle, which I usually carried on such expeditions as this one, and strode quickly into the thick line of trees that skirted the river. The stream, by the way, scarcely deserved the name of river, as it was not much more than a mere mud hole, and dry during half the year. At the present time it contained about four feet of lazily running water. The edge of the stream was a thickly-matted mass of wild rose, blackberry bushes, and grape vines; a typical nesting location of the cardinal. I scrambled about, tearing my clothes on the sharp thorns of the bushes, scratching my face and hands, and once I sank ankle-deep into some mire caused by the rain. As I continued down the edge of the stream, peering into every bush that might contain a nest, a red streak flashed over my head, and without warning a female cardinal flew past me down the stream. Looking up directly over my head, I saw her nest, situated about six feet from the ground in a blooming dogwood, overgrown with wild grape vines, twigs,

tendrils, and roots, heavily intertwined with grass. The eggs were four in number, and bluish white, mottled over with brownish and dark lavender specks which gave them a beautiful appearance. After examining the nest and its surroundings, I sat down on a nearby log to rest. Since the cardinal was one of my favorite acquaintances of our feathered neighbors, I decided to tarry. I saw Mrs. Cardinal across the way waiting anxiously for me to leave. As soon as I perceived this, I moved back the way I had come, about a hundred yards, and again sat down. Presently I saw the faithful aristocratic little bird dart across the river and settle upon her nest.

While sitting on the moss-covered logs I began to feel rather sleepy, and as I had risen very early that morning I was soon dozing off into the arms of gentle Morpheus. I do not know how long I had been oblivious of my surroundings, but, as I am an easy sleeper, I was awakened by feeling something creepy passing over my feet. I quickly opened my eyes and was horrified at seeing a very large water moccasin or "cotton-mouthed" snake gliding over me. Apparently, I was something new to him, and at every move he would stop to investigate. Knowing that this specimen of snake is very poisonous, I remained as quiet as possible, although my heart, which was beat-

ing like a trip-hammer, nearly betrayed me. After about fifteen minutes, the worst I had passed through in my life, the snake moved on. Satisfied with his scrutiny, he glided leisurely away. I picked up my rifle and vowed that he would never bother anyone again. Taking careful aim, although the sight was somewhat shaky before my eyes, I fired, hitting him squarely in the head. After quivering a few moments, in which his tail thrashed about wildly, he stretched his full length and lay still. I left him lying where he fell, and bothered no more about him. The morning had well advanced, so I quickly got out of the woods and made for home.

About two weeks after my acquaintance with the "reddest red bird" I had ever seen, I approached the nest, and found to my delight that it had been usurped by four tiny, hungry birds, who kept their parents busy supplying them with food. In a few weeks they were old enough to leave the nest, and four more red beauties were added to our neighborhood to help cheer us up during the long Winter months.

On many a green branch swinging,
Little birdlets singing
Warble sweet notes in the air.
Flowers fair
There I found.
Green spread the meadow all around.

Nithart.

THE ROMANCE OF MISTER AND MISTRESS BOB WHITE AND FAMILY

"Sweet now at morn and eve the quail
Repeats his plaintive, whistling note,
And softly fall the answering cries
That over wood and corn-field float."

McLellan.

WHILE strolling through a stubble field one bright, balmy morning in the early Spring of nineteen hundred thirteen, the clear, staccato call of a Bob White came to me on the clarified morning breeze from an adjoining corn field. I paused a moment to listen to those enchanting notes which are music to the sportsman's ear. Again, "Bob White! ah, Bob White!" rang out clear and pure from the corn field. This time an answering "Bob White!" emanated from the stubble. The whistle was repeated and answered numerous times that morning, for it was the mating season of these game birds.

They say that in the domain of Bob White, mates are not easily won, and in one particular case I can vouch for the statement. With the aid of a pair of field glasses and a screen of blackberry bushes, I witnessed a most thrilling battle between

rival males. They would come at each other with the fury of game cocks, fighting desperately, pecking and striking at each other as if their lives depended upon the issue, and, indeed it did, for in that fight the love of a sweetheart was involved. All this while the object of their attentions, the little brown demure Miss Bob White, was perched on a stump nearby, viewing with evident satisfaction the battle, which was staged on her account. Finally, the vanquished bird, thoroughly beaten, slowly retreated; and, with an envious eye watched from a distance the proud victor strutting about before his queen; she, by a seeming indifference, concealed her admiration for her hero. The attitude of the female bird only added to his anger. Spying the disgruntled rival, the conqueror sent him into ignominious flight by a few well directed blows.

A few weeks after this episode I re-visited the locality, which was only a short distance from town, intent upon finding my newly-acquired Bob White friends. To my delight, I discovered both birds busily engaged in collecting grasses, leaves and mosses for a large, clumsy nest, that was being made on the old worm-eaten rail fences. It was a perfect place for concealment; blackberry bushes concealed it from the hungry eyes of passing hawks, and the depredations of mischievous boys.

Food was to be had in plenty, for a corn field was partly enclosed by one of the fences, and the other surrounded an old stubble field. Adjacent to this site was a blackberry thicket where the fruit was available in season. At intervals the cock bird would pause in his work, mount the top rail of the fence, and boldly utter his "Bob White! ah, Bob White!" which his demure mate coyly answered by her unobtrusive notes, which, interpretated by human methods, sounds like "Here's me!"

Several weeks slipped by; the season was early May when I again visited the nest. It contained fourteen creamy eggs, arranged with the utmost care, so as to economize space. On this occasion I saw neither of the birds. They probably were feeding; but, as both male and female assist in the incubation, I knew that one of them would be back in a short time, so I quietly and quickly left the vicinity.

During the twenty-four days it requires for incubation the male Bob White is much in evidence, strutting about and uttering his cheery notes from morning until night. He is very fearless during this time and will endanger his own life trying to distract the attention of some enemy from his silent brooding mate and her nest full of eggs. Mistress Bob White is sel-

dom if ever seen during this period; she being busily engaged with her eggs and scarcely finding the time to snatch a few mouthfuls of food. Her consort covers the nest during her absence.

One morning just as Aurora was casting her spell upon the earth, I stole out to see how Mr. and Mrs. Bob White and the nest full of eggs were faring. As I was crossing the road that leads up to the corn field in which their home was located, I saw the birds leading a flock of downy little ones into a wood patch on the other side of the road. I counted twelve chicks, as they scampered for safety under leaves and other available hiding places at my approach.

It was very interesting watching this brood of Bob Whites follow their mother about, for in this they are precisely the same as young chicks in charge of the mother hen. They soon learned what berries, cereals, seeds and grasses they must eat. The parent birds are untiring in their efforts to protect their young. The mother bird on the approach of an enemy, will utter a shrill warning "wee-teek!" and, while all the youngsters are scampering for a place of safety, she feigns lameness or resorts to some other artifice in her endeavors to lead the enemy in another direction.

About a month subsequent to the foregoing episode, I paid another visit to this interesting bird family. I found that the young had grown wonderfully during that time and were now so nearly their full size that it was difficult to distinguish them from the adult birds. They could now easily provide for themselves, but at the least approach of danger they would scamper to places of safety in the same manner as when they were downy chicks. If one remained very quietly in his place of vantage where he could not be seen, he was rewarded by hearing the faint but pathetic "Loi! loi! loi!" as the mother called her brood to her and endeavored to gather them under her protecting wings. These were, however, quite unequal to the occasion since her family had grown so large.

The Summer days passed and the birds were now full grown. From out of the meadows and the stubble came the whistle, "Bob White! ah, Bob White!" clear and distinct as in the early days of Spring, for the young were now fully grown and just as sure on their wings as their parents. One clear, frosty morning in early November, I accidentally discovered the bevy, huddled together in a protecting covert, evidently not having yet stirred about for their morning meal. It is not often that one is enabled to approach a bevy like this, but for

once fortune was with me. I approached very carefully, and as they flushed I counted twelve birds, including the parents, which, of course, could not be distinguished. There were two missing, and I presumed those were young birds who had fallen victims to some swooping hawk or prowling fox.

Next to man, the hawk and the fox, notwithstanding many statements made to the contrary, are the worst enemies of the quail. So sudden is their attack, that the poor, frightened birds scarcely have a chance to escape. The laws of Ohio have prohibited quail shooting for two years, so at least my bird family is immune from fatalities on that score during the Winter. In view of the fact that the young birds were now full grown, I felt that there was a reasonable chance of the bevy getting through the season unless the weather became too inclement. King Winter was coming on in leaps and bounds, and I resolved to befriend my little proteges wherever I could.

December went by rapidly and January was ushered in, cold and severe. I awoke one morning to find it snowing, and upon looking out I saw that the ground was covered to a depth of nearly a foot. Immediately I thought of my poor Bobs exposed to all the rigors of this wintry morning, and I decided to help them if possible. So donning heavy clothing and substan-

tial footwear, I started out with a big bag of cracked corn and wheat, another of marble dust, a water pan and a small axe. The marble dust or its equivalent is one of the essentials toward keeping birds alive in the winter, for unless they have some kind of grit, which aids in the digestion of their food, all the other provisions are of no avail. They cannot live without something of this nature.

When I reached the coverts which the birds used, I cut down a sapling, selected two forked boughs for uprights and drove them into the ground, allowing about two feet in height. Upon each of these I placed a straight branch and then put the branches and twigs crosswise on these, thus forming a slanting shelter two feet high in front and sloping to the ground in the rear. From the adjoining corn field I gathered fodder, which I placed on this retreat to make it impervious to snow and moisture, and then upon the top, more boughs were placed to give the improvised lean-to an appearance that harmonized with the surroundings. When my work was done I was well pleased with the result, for it formed a perfect shelter which would protect any bird that might make use of it in the most inclement weather. I scraped the snow away inside and scattered the food that I brought with me, and also the sand and the pan, which I

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filled with water from the brook. The opening of this little shelter faced the south, so that the birds might be protected from the north wind. Before leaving the place I searched about the vicinity to see how the birds had weathered the storm. Under a low-hanging cedar on the edge of an adjoining piece of timber land, I found traces which indicated that my birds had found shelter from the severe northerly blasts. I did not see the Bob Whites this particular morning; they were probably out feeding as best they could among the snowdrifts.

It was still snowing when I started for the city, about two miles distant. The immaculate white landscape and its beautiful surroundings were formed into a blurry vision as the snow was blown about in a blinding disarray. Even at that I was not alone in my chilly walk to town. A tiny tufted titmouse and several chickadees that accompanied me part of the way kept cheering me on with their sweet twittering, hopping from twig to twig a few feet above my head, maintaining their incessant chatter. It was bird cheer of the most entrancing variety for a day like this. A red flash flared ahead of me as a cardinal flitted from a snow-laden shelter in quest of food, but I doubt if he was successful. A rabbit started from his form in a patch

of weeds as I tramped on. Within an hour's time I was at home by a crackling fire, making notes of what I had seen that wonderful morning, for I hoped to use them at some future time.

The next morning dawned clear, bright and very cold. I was at the bird shelter long before the thin crescent of a silvery moon had slipped from a western sky. I approached the place quietly, but a loud "Whirr-r-r-r!" proclaimed that the birds were on the alert. They had evidently found the place the day before, and that was all that was necessary. The food which had been placed there for them was all gone, so I quickly scattered a new supply of cracked corn, wheat and other food, replenishing the water by breaking the ice in the brook and filling the pan. I then concealed myself behind a clump of cedars to await developments. In a few minutes several chickadees, probably my friends of yesterday, came down to breakfast. In about an hour, which was the coldest period I ever experienced, the whole bevy of quail, twelve in all, returned. While the birds were feeding, one of their number would act as guard to warn the others of any danger. They were all plump and beautifully mottled, their rich chestnut and grey markings contrasting nicely against the white foreground of their surroundings.

I quietly withdrew without flushing them, happy that I was able to provide food and shelter for such beautiful birds, which are without a doubt the noblest of all game varieties.

Every day or two throughout the long Winter months I fed the birds, and within several weeks' time I had succeeded in greatly diminishing their fear of me; I could approach within ten feet without disturbing them. The Bob White has refused to become domesticated, yet, a firm friendship may be established with him by adopting the methods I have related.

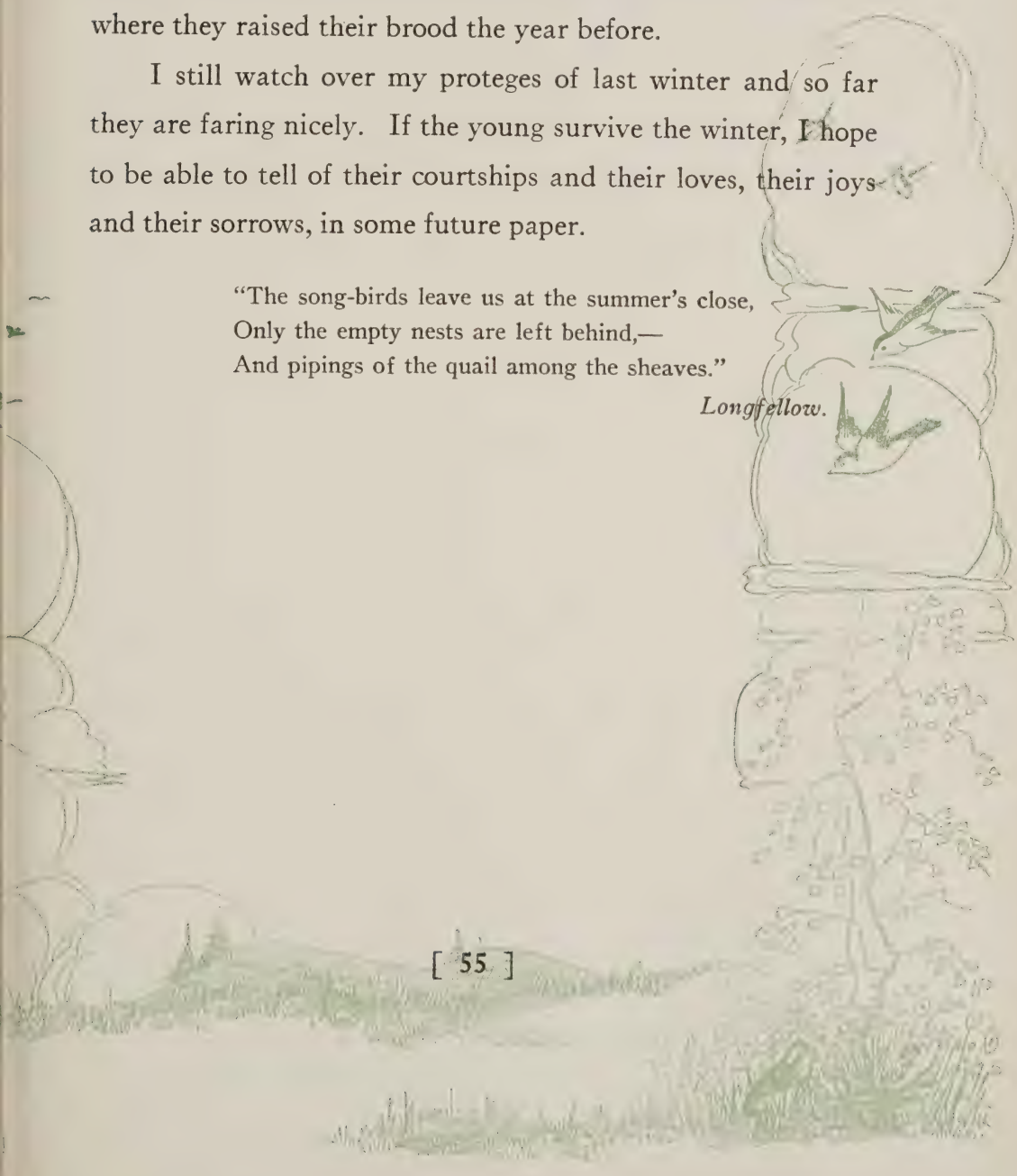
Although that Winter lingered long and wearily, it was finally obliged to succumb to the pleasant sunshine and the south winds that came with the approach of mid-April. On a bright afternoon of that month I had an opportunity to get away from other labors, and I went out to find my bevy of Bob Whites. As I came in sight of the familiar fields of stubble and meadow, the clarion-like notes, "Bob White! ah, Bob White!" welled from a half-score of throats, emanating from the woods to the left, the wheat on the right, and the corn just beyond. The family had evidently separated, as is customary when the mating season begins; no doubt some of the young birds were thinking of going to housekeeping on their own responsibility.

Perhaps some of these were within a short distance of their winter's headquarters, perhaps some had gone farther away. The old birds, however, remained practically in the same spot where they raised their brood the year before.

I still watch over my proteges of last winter and so far they are faring nicely. If the young survive the winter, I hope to be able to tell of their courtships and their loves, their joys and their sorrows, in some future paper.

"The song-birds leave us at the summer's close,
Only the empty nests are left behind,—
And pipings of the quail among the sheaves."

Longfellow.







HOME BUILDING IN THE BOG

"Where scarce the sunspears, quivering bright,
May pierce the foliage with their light,
Ah! there so shadowy sleeps the wood
Where hermit woodcock seek their food."

McLellan.

I ATTRIBUTE to the kindness of a friend my first observation of the breeding habits of a pair of woodcock.

While out for a stroll one early Spring day last year he flushed a female woodcock from her nest. Immediately, upon his return home he reported his find, knowing that such a discovery would be of great interest to me. His description of the location of the nest tallies with the place where I had also found a Mallard duck's nest the previous year. I knew this ground very well, as I had spent some of the most delightful days in the open with the birds of this locality.

Next morning found me on my way to the nest before the break of day. A fine mist was falling, blown by a west wind which made walking anything but a pleasure, just one of the many inconveniences a bird lover has to contend with while in quest of his favorite hobby or study.

The first gray streak of light in the east proclaimed the advent of day as I arrived at the location given me by my friend, a strip of woods which bordered a large field.

As the light grew stronger I started my search for the nest. I had proceeded about a hundred feet, into the heart of the woods, when without warning, a loud whirr of wings startled me with its suddenness. I saw a brown streak go sailing between the trees then disappear into the adjoining fields. Cautiously, I advanced to where I heard the bird rustle. Near an old rotten stump I found the nest, just as my kind friend had told me.

On a few dry leaves which served as a nest I found three buffy eggs, spotted with reddish brown, the home of a pair of woodcock. As this species usually lays four eggs, I had reason to believe the set was not complete. Not caring to let the eggs chill, I left them, hoping the mother bird would return soon. I lingered about the spot for about twenty minutes and finally I had the satisfaction of seeing the faithful mother bird fly back to the nest.

On my way home I had to pass through a swampy bit of land, and in here I noticed many neatly bored holes, showing

plainly the work of woodcock in search of angleworms, their staple food. I also flushed two birds in this swamp.

About four days later I was at the woodcock's home bright and early. The eggs were uncovered and I found four this time, proving that the set had not been completed at the time of my first visit to the nest. The female bird was probably down at the swamp getting a breakfast of angleworms. I carefully hid myself behind a thick clump of bare saplings about ten feet away and awaited her return. In about half an hour she came sailing over the field and into the woods. Alighting near the nest she looked at the eggs, then, turning them over with her long bill, quietly settled upon them, assuming her task of incubation. On the edge of the woods I flushed a male, probably the mate of the nesting bird. They are always to be seen near their faithful brown-eyed little wives.

This particular morning was a glorious one. The resurrection of Spring was at hand. The trees were beginning to assume a greenish tint and early vernal flowers were nodding to the winds. The Spring migrants on their way north, paused in their feeding among the trees long enough to render sweet snatches of song, that always help to gladden the hearts of all nature-lovers.

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Knowing the woodcock to be nocturnal in its habits I decided to pay this pair a call at night.

One evening about two weeks after my first visit with the woodcock I crept silently into the woods that sheltered their home, just as dusk was settling over the earth. The voice of most of the feathered folk had already been stilled for the night, save one woodthrush, that had arrived a little earlier than usual from his Winter sojourn. He was gently tolling the passing of another day, from somewhere in the woods.

As I glided into my improvised blind, I noticed the female woodcock on the nest. Her brownish, mottled back, blended perfectly with her surroundings; a wonderful example of protective coloration, making it difficult, at first, for me to find her.

While I lay crouched low behind my screen of trees I saw, heretofore unnnoticed, the male bird strut into a cleared space about ten feet square and about twenty feet from the nest. Then began one of the greatest aerial stunts I had ever witnessed. Whirling up in a spiral to about forty or fifty feet, chirping some unintelligible notes, he descended in slow circles, until he finally reached the ground. Here he strutted about, with trailing wings and tail erect, uttering excited picks intended for his unconcerned little mate, who silently watched his per-

formances. Seven times I watched him perform his stunt. He then appeared close to his mate (he must have induced her to leave her nest for a bite to eat), and with a whirr of wings they both flew through the woods, heading for the swamp.

Night had by this time slipped his sable cloak upon the land, and with no moon to guide me I had no little trouble in making my way out of the place. The weird calling of a whip-poorwill accompanied me on my way through the woods, but the rest of the voices of the night were strangely silent this Spring evening.

I repeated my nocturnal call to the woodcock the following evening and again I witnessed the wonderful gyrations of the male bird, only that this time he uttered a soft cheeping sound as he glided horizontally to the ground. As on the previous evening the female bird sat quietly on her eggs and apparently remained indifferent to the marvelous performance of her consort. The show was repeated only four times on this occasion, whereupon the male flew out of the woods toward the swamp unaccompanied by his mate. I do not know the reason why she did not leave her eggs this night. I watched her until it grew too dark to make further observations, and when I left her she was sitting on her eggs.

On my next trip to the nest, early in the morning four days later, as I was approaching the nest I inadvertently stepped upon a twig, causing it to snap sharply. With a whirr of wings I noticed a woodcock fly from somewhere near the nest, but on reaching it I found the mother bird calmly at her duty. It was the male bird I had flushed by my clumsiness.

Seeing that she was not so easily frightened, I casually drew near the nest. I was within ten feet of her and she did not stir. Cautiously advancing to within six feet of her I could clearly see her brown little body and bright brown eyes, as she boldly stood her ground. On advancing about two feet nearer, it was too much for even her steady nerves, and with a loud whirr of wings she almost hit me in the face as she sped away through the woods. The eggs surely must have been quickened, or she would not have held her ground as long as she did. I immediately left the woods, as her eggs might become chilled if I kept her off of them too long.

Two days later I was at the nest bright and early just as the rising sun lit up the surrounding woods. When I drew near the nest I failed to see the now familiar form of the mother bird upon it. Hastening forward I found it deserted, with four nearly split eggs lying about, telling the story of the advent of

four more woodcock into the world. I had never seen the young before, and I was anxious to get a look at these birds, if possible. As they were able to get about without the assistance of their mother, I did not know where to look for them. They are, however, under the care of their mother for about a month after their hatching, so I presumed if I could find her, I would see her young. I was disappointed, however, for I never saw the mother or her brood again during the season.

A farmer living near the woods told me that he had seen a woodcock cross the road near the woods followed by four young birds, but it was more or less a conjecture that these birds might have belonged to the nest I had so diligently been watching for the past three weeks. Some day I hope to be able to see the young woodcocks.

Owing to the wise game laws, the woodcock is slowly but surely coming into its own in southern Ohio, and I think it is but a matter of a few years until this bird will be as plentiful as formerly.

"These shy, secluded birds all day
In cool, thick-shaded haunts delay;
But when the woods at eve are dim
To open feeding-grounds they skim."

McLellan.

THE DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF THE SORA RAILS

"Since earliest spring-time they have sought
The utmost northern isle and shoal;
Their chosen haunt and breeding ground,
In latitude beneath the Pole.

McLellan.

BEFORE commencing this story of the home of a pair of sora rails and their home life, I must admit, that the finding of their nest was purely accidental. It happened like this:

One rare evening in early Spring, just as twilight was softly stealing over the land, a friend and myself were canoeing down a large stream in western Ohio. We leisurely paddled along feasting our eyes upon a wonderful scenery about us and making mental notes of the early migrants as we chanced to see them. At a bend in the river I noticed a great blue heron fly over us, alighting along the shore in a patch of sedge and water grass that lined the river at this point. We quickly paddled over to where we saw him land, in hopes of getting a better view of him. As we neared the spot, he flew with great wing beats up the river.

The momentum of the canoe carried us far into the reeds close up to the shore. We sat there a few minutes to rest. Gazing about me among the tall dead grasses as high as our heads, I noticed a tussock that looked suspicious. Eagerly shoving with my paddle I pushed the canoe up to the spot and parting the grass, beheld nine eggs. It was now almost dark and I was unable to distinguish their coloring, which next day proved to belong to a pair of sora rails. After marking the spot we paddled out to mid stream, and set our direction for home, elated with the discovery; this being the first nest of sora rail I had ever found.

Early next morning just as dawn began to glow in the eastern sky, I anchored my canoe down the shore about a hundred feet from the nest, and quietly approached the home of the sora rail. It was about five feet from the water's edge and I could easily observe it with the aid of my field glasses from that point of vantage. The high grasses about me afforded an excellent blind.

I could see the yellow-billed, brown-eyed little mother upon the nest as I gazed through the reeds. Her olive-brown back, mingled with black and white spots and stripes showed plainly through the rushes. Just before the sun arose, she

quietly slipped off the nest and flew with unsteady flight over the rushes to another part of the marsh. I quickly waded out to the nest, examined the eggs, for I had never seen the sora rail eggs up to this time. Their color was a dull buff, spotted with dark brown, and lavender spots. They were beautiful to see, nine of them snugly packed down in a nest of grasses and sedge lined with a few fine grasses. In all, the nest was a very carelessly constructed affair. The platform on which it was raised consisted of a few reeds about which it was woven. I made my way back to the blind not a minute too soon, for I barely settled in my position when the mother bird returned to her duty. She did not leave that nest again until evening, as I was faithfully watching her throughout that memorable hot day.

For five successive days I made the seven-mile trip in my canoe to visit the nest of the rail. At no time after my first visit did I find her off the nest. Faithful to her trust she guarded the incubated eggs with unremitting assiduity. She certainly must have left the nest at some time or other during the day but whenever I approached her she was always incubating, nor did I again get a look at her beautiful eggs.

All the rails are known as nocturnal feeders, so I thought I would pay them a night visit and perhaps learn something of their feeding habits. I chose a bright night with a full moon directly overhead in a starlit sky. The trip down the river was enchanting this wondrous night. As I neared the nest of the rails I brought the canoe into the shore and landed.

The surrounding country was lit up like day, which made my locating the nest less difficult. All through the marshy land I could hear a series of notes, "kek, k! k! kewee, peet! peet!" which kept up all the time I was in the vicinity. I readily identified the notes as belonging to the rails. The place seemed alive with them if one could judge from the calls that issued from the marsh.

With some difficulty I made out the nest of the sora, and was quite surprised to see the female bird closely sitting her eggs. Her voice was not joined in the rail chorus, which makes me think the male birds of the neighborhood produced the not unmusical entertainment.

I could hear slight splashes occasionally, but try as I would, I could see no other birds about, and yet I knew the place was full of them. The rails were able to flit about through a maze of stalks and reeds, owing to their compressed bodies, built to

thread their way through the thickest tangles of cat tails and reed stalks, without making the slightest sound.

After spending the better part of the night with the marsh birds I left them, and returned home. I shall never forget that ride. The moon had slipped down behind the trees on the west of the river and every now and then a silver beam shot across the stream as a rift in the dense foliage permitted it. The voices of the night were much in evidence. Across the river in the woods several screech owls were busy answering one another while the frog chorus kept up unceasingly and the night insects tried their best to entertain me through my seven-mile ride back to town.

Came a day about a week later, that I returned to the rail nest and found it empty. Very much disappointed at not seeing the mother and her brood I eagerly searched among the reeds for traces of them, but was completely baffled. The young of the sora rail are precocious, and by this time they could be miles from their former home. I hoped this was not the case, as I wanted to make a study of the young as they are rather a novelty to behold, especially to an observer who had never seen one of them before. After careful combing of the marsh near

the nest, I gave up hopes of seeing this family of rail youngsters, and getting into my canoe I started to paddle toward home, rather dejected by my failure.

On my homeward journey I kept my canoe close to the shore, perchance I might see another rail and her young, feeding among the reeds along the way. In this conjecture I was not wrong. I had paddled down the stream about a hundred yards when I noticed a slight movement among some cat tails growing about profusely at this point. I slipped quietly up to the place and peered about among the rushes but saw nothing. Thinking that I may have been mistaken, I started to leave the place when I saw a sora rail, a female followed by a brood of young, about ten feet ahead, in a tangle of reeds, cat tails, and arrow heads. I grasped my glasses, always handy for an emergency like this, and beheld nine downy little rails black as night in appearance, and with a soft tuft of whitish yellow on the breast, and a bright red protuberance at the base of the upper mandible. They were a funny lot of youngsters to behold as they darted here and there after objects on the water. I could not make out what they were catching, but they must have been water insects or some vegetable material. The mother bird was sailing about among her offspring pointing out as it were, the

things they might eat. While I was watching their performance and without any sign of danger near, as far as I could see, the mother bird suddenly darted into the dark recesses among the reeds followed by her young. In a few seconds the entire brood had disappeared.

I waited around that place for the best part of two hours, carefully concealed, but I saw no more of the sora and her young and to this day I do not know what caused her to give me the slip.

About a month later I passed by the locality where I saw my first sora rail nest, but the place seemed deserted. I imitated the call of the birds and in a few minutes the whole marsh was alive with the "kek, kek, ker-wee-peep" peep call of the sora rails.

Thousands of these birds are slaughtered annually for their flesh, which at best is rather flavorless and really unfit for food. The game laws of Ohio, however, preclude spring shooting, which protects the bird during nesting season.

"In swamps impervious build their nest
(So northern fishermen declare),
Where none may reach them to molest."

McLellan.

BOB WHITES AT HOME

"Shrill and clear from coppice near,
A song within the woodland ringing,
The treble note from a silver throat
The siren of the fields is singing—
Bob-bob-white!
And from the height the answer sweet
Floats faintly o'er the rippling wheat—
Bob-white!"

Marion Franklin Ham.

FOR days prior to the nesting season, I had been hearing the nuptial call of a male Bob White. It seemed to emanate from a ragweed field inclosed by an old rail fence, which was fringed by oak, walnut and beech trees, with a more or less heavy undergrowth of briers.

One Summer afternoon in early June, after an all-day unsuccessful search for the elusive nest of an oven bird, I was coming through the ragweed field, along the fence, when a brown flash and a whir of wings startled me from my reveries. Immediately all alert, I carefully searched among the weeds and greenbriers at this point, and was finally rewarded by discovering a simple nest lined with grasses and leaves, at the intersection of the old decayed rails. The nest contained sixteen

beautiful pure white eggs; the largest number of eggs of a Bob White I have ever found. The greatest number I had discovered up to this time was a nest of fifteen, found several years before. Carefully noting the place and position of the nest, so as to be able to easily find it again, I left the vicinity. As I proceeded through the field I noted the return of the hen bird, as she flew through the woods adjoining the field.

I again visited Mrs. Bob White several days later and found her sitting on her eggs, seemingly not aware that her arch enemy, man, was studying her from a vantage point behind some blackberry bushes on the other side of the fence. As I was watching her, the cock Bob White flew to the top rail, about thirty feet away and uttered the rally call, "coi hee!" so delightful to the hunter's ears. The hen bird moved nervously and shifting her plump little body, answered him with one single note, a clear whistle; probably used by the female in answering her mate, but the only time I have ever heard it. I do not think this note is characteristic of the hen bird. An indiscreet movement on my part, sent the mother bird, as well as her mate, off like a pair of rockets. Satisfied with my observations for the day I left the field to the Bob White and his family-to-be.

On my way through the woods, I paused a little to listen to the outburst of song issuing from the throat of a wood thrush or bell bird. This bird is considered one of the sweetest songsters of America. Its only rival in this respect is its cousin, the Hermit Thrush, only known to us during its migration periods in the early Spring and late Autumn. The liquid notes of this particular wood thrush sounded clear and beautiful as they floated through the soft Summer twilight.

I was loathe to leave this wonderful performance, but I noted the sun was fast sinking in a flood of crimson glory and I wished to get to the city before dark. I reluctantly left the woods, hoping to hear that wonderful song repeated at some later day.

The next time I visited the nest, or just fourteen days from the date of discovery, the eggs were uncovered, probably while the female was making her daily toilet, or taking a dust bath in some nearby road. The clear staccato Bob White call of the male bird, came floating to me from down the field, showing that the eggs were only deserted temporarily; for, since the male bird was so near, his mate could not be far away. Just as I turned to leave, I saw her coming through the air from

across the field, returning to her duty. Ten more days, and she would be the proud mother of sixteen little downy chicks, as it generally takes twenty-four days to incubate the eggs.

I was again treated to the wood thrush recital on this occasion, but I continued on through the woods, as I had another nest to visit on this particular day and I wished to make observations before it grew too dark.

On my next visit to the Bob White nest, neither parent bird being near, I made a close-up study of the eggs, however, not touching them, for if they are handled the nest will be deserted at once. The eggs were very skillfully packed in, the pointed ends down, so as to save space and permit the hen bird to cover all the eggs, during the period of incubation. On this particular morning the sun was just creeping over the crest of a hill half a mile away, and flooding the fields with its beautiful golden rays. It was a sight for the gods to behold, and the soft summer air filled with the fragrance of unseen censors swung by the hand of Nature, fanned my cheeks. Somewhere in the woods a song sparrow, one of the very early risers, stirred about uneasily and finally burst into a rich riot of melody. Presently the other denizens of the woods began to stir about and in a short time the air, this amphitheatre of the open, was filled with

the morning songs of hundreds of feathered creatures. Several rabbits were gamboling among the ragweed patches and squirrels barked from the branches of towering oaks. By the time the sun had climbed above the hill, and its rich, warm rays proclaimed another June day of unmatched splendor, I had to leave this place and hurry to my toil in the city. How I envy the country-bred boy, brought up among these beautiful surroundings, scarcely appreciating the wonders spread out all about him. His, is the chance of studying Nature in her every mood and whim.

A few weeks later I passed through the woods and was in the act of climbing an old rail fence when a shrill "wee-tee!" greeted my ears from the vicinity of the nest. I knew from this call that the eggs had hatched, for this was the mother's note of warning to her young.

Carefully crossing the fence, I screened behind some tall weeds and awaited developments. In about ten minutes I saw the female Bob White come strutting along in and out among the weeds, followed by sixteen little chicks, in appearance not unlike a brood of young chickens. They had dark brown streaked heads, the bodies being a lighter brown. One little fellow still had half his shell attached to his back, but while I

was watching him this dropped off. In a short while Mr. Bob White joined his family and he and his mate proceeded to teach the young birds what they might eat. The young of the Bob White are precocious and proceed to feed themselves immediately after they are born.

As I was watching from my cramped position, a shrill note of warning issued from the throat of the mother bird, and in a few seconds all the chicks, I can't understand to this day how they did it, were safely tucked under their mother's wings. Sixteen of them securely hidden away from danger, which this time proved to be a Cooper's hawk intent on his morning's breakfast. But he was not to feed on this brood of chicks, thanks to their mother's watchfulness. After the danger had passed, the fledglings emerged from under their protection of wings and proceeded with their lessons on what not to eat. Half flying, half running about, they gathered weeds of various kinds and some berries that I could not identify, although they must have been from the last year's growth. With the aid of my field glasses I saw them take insects from the ground and undergrowth about them. The birds seemed to have forgotten about their recent home, and they did not visit it during that day. I followed the brood through the ragweed field, across a road,

into a stubble patch and later into a deep woods, a half mile from their former home. Indications showed that they had not used the nest after being hatched. I had never observed this strange habit of desertion up to this time, although it actually happens according to the eminent ornithologists.

I lost sight of the bevy while in the woods, owing to the thick impenetrable undergrowth of wild rose, sweet brier and numerous other growths. The work of this day, tramping through thorny bushes, crouching behind weeds hours at a time, a prey to all mosquitoes and other insects of the neighborhood, with a scorching sun beating down upon one from a cloudless sky, brought its reward. But this could hardly be called pleasure, for all was just a small part of a wonderful study, and the compensation is more than ample to one who loves Nature.

On my next call to this Bob White family I spent a half day in locating them, but I finally found the brood along a narrow stream about a mile from their former location. The young birds were about two-thirds grown by this time and were all well feathered. I did not see Mrs. Bob White and I presume she was busy incubating her second set of eggs, which in this locality is not an unusual occurrence. Upon my approach Mr. Bob White uttered a low warning whistle and instantly the

young birds were scattering everywhere and in ten seconds not one was to be seen. The parent bird flattened himself to earth and I could not see him. It was only afterward that he became visible. Almost tramping on him he flew to the farther bank of the narrow stream.

I did not see my new acquaintance any more, as this was my last visit to them; although I probably ran across them later on in the Fall, while observing the migrations of certain birds to southern climes, because I flushed two large bevies, one of which located in this neighborhood. All the birds were large and fully developed individuals. Owing to legislation recently passed by the state of Ohio the Bob White is now placed on the song bird list, but it is a question if the birds will really be benefited by this act.

"For now the bevies are abroad,
To seek in stubble-fields their feed,
Or where the bushy covert drops
Its juicy wreath, its ripen'd seed."

McLellan.

THE MALLARD'S RENDEZVOUS

"The gray duck and the dipper come,
The brant-geese from the ocean-foam,
The brilliant mallard, and the teal
With eye of light and wing of steel,
All gather in the Autumn day
To haunt the waters of the bay."

McLellan.

IT was a bright morning in early Spring, last year, that I had the very good fortune to locate a Mallard duck's nest. I say good fortune, for here in southern Ohio, the finding of a Mallard's nest is a lucky discovery.

While tramping through a weed field on this particular morning, I noticed a suspicious-looking tussock of grass, with an opening in one side. Being always on the lookout for something new in the realm of birdland, I examined this tuft and to my surprise and delight, I found seven greenish-gray eggs of the Mallard duck. They were neatly covered over with down plucked from the breast of the female so that they might retain their heat, while she, in all probability, was taking her breakfast and a swim at a stream that flowed some hundred yards from the field wherein the nest was found.

I quietly left the nest after making a mental note of its surroundings. Here was my opportunity for a close study of the home life of a pair of Mallard ducks.

I walked down to the stream hoping to see the ducks, but in this I was disappointed. A lone heron was flopping down stream as I approached, but the ducks were not to be seen this morning.

I returned to the nest, as this was my chance to examine it carefully. A Mallard duck seldom leaves her nest, once the eggs are laid, and as she was gone for a few minutes my opportunity presented itself. The nest was composed of fine dried reeds, grasses and leaves, snugly set in a tussock of high grass that formed an arch over it, protecting the eggs from the sun and duck enemies. I dared not touch the eggs for fear of driving away the parent birds, so I was content with noting their size, color and number, whereupon I left the field, elated with my find.

About three days later I found an opportunity to visit the Mallard home. As there was no screen of leaves or high bushes near the nest, I spent over half an hour reaching it. Crawling on my hands and knees, a foot at a time, I finally reached the vicinity of the nest. The Mallard, though very inquisitive, is

one of the wariest of our ducks: my reason in this matter for using extreme caution. I slowly peered over the top of a patch of weeds six feet from the nest, and saw a demure little duck, unattractive in her dark brown and buff feathers, her beady little eyes steadily gazing about her, ready to flee at the first sign of danger. The drake Mallard was nowhere to be seen, nor did I see him during the interesting time I spent with his mate.

Early in June he undergoes an extra molt, at which period, according to ornithologists, he is unable to aid his mate in her duties, however willing he might be. It is a curious fact that as soon as his mate completes her set of eggs he is off to parts unknown, nor does he again put in an appearance until the Fall flight. The female bears the burden of raising the brood alone.

About a week later I paid another visit to the Mallard nest. Day was just breaking as I reached the river a short distance from my objective. I quietly approached the nest, but could scarcely locate the spot. Owing to the darkness, I was forced to await the coming of daylight.

In a short time I was able to make out the form of the brooding mother as she quietly sat upon her eggs.

The sun had now risen, causing the weed patch and grasses to glisten with dew. The morning was unusually quiet and the

squawk of a heron as he flew over the river could be plainly heard. Nearby, on a low bush, a field sparrow greeted the new day with his simple little song. The "top, top, top," of a woodpecker could plainly be heard somewhere. It was good to be out this wonderful morning, alone with God's creatures.

I patiently watched and waited for some action on the part of the Mallard. In a short time she began to show signs of life, raised her head and peered about to make sure that the coast was clear. Having satisfied herself in this matter she gently arose to a standing position and flapped her wings as if stretching. She next covered her eggs with the down that was scattered about. Whereupon, she sedately waddled off toward the river, to get her breakfast and make her toilet. I quickly changed my uncomfortable position for a more restful one, and awaited her return. In about eight minutes she was back to her nest, and after turning the eggs with the aid of her bill, she quietly settled upon them, and I am certain she did not leave them until the next morning.

The Mallard duck seldom leaves the nest after the eggs are laid, and I know in this case the brooding bird seldom left them. I did not try to flush her, being afraid she might desert her duty.

After several hours of observation I left the nest and followed the river homeward-bound. Bird life is very plentiful in this locality. I counted thirty-one species of birds in the four-mile walk along the river. Some of them, however, are migrants that just visit us on their long trips to their northern homes.

For my next visit with this duck family I chose a dull-cloudy day with a promise of rain. The weather kept its promise, and when I reached the nest about midday, it was raining hard, with a chill wind blowing from the north. I approached the nest with less caution than was my wont in the wet woods, as the weeds in this case would not betray my approach by crackling underfoot. The faithful mother was on her nest, facing south, with the wind at her back. The tussock of grass formed only a slight protection from the rain, which constantly fell upon the brooding bird, but she seemed wholly indifferent to the wet surroundings.

Not being a duck, I hurriedly departed this day, as I had to face a chill wind and rain on a four-mile hike back to town. No bird life was to be seen. The heavy downpour evidently dampened the spirits of the birds.

I arrived home soaking wet, but after putting on a change of clothing I felt none the worse for my damp experience.

The last visit to the nest was just twenty-three days from the time of its actual discovery. As I approached the spot I did not see the familiar form of the duck. Cautiously drawing near I found the nest deserted and six of the eggs gone. A few scattered egg-shells lying near it, showed that they must have hatched; all but the one egg which, upon examination, I found to be not fertile. I hurried to the river in hopes of seeing the Mallard and her brood. On parting the heavy growth of bushes so as to get a view, I espied, to my delight, the mother and her brood peacefully swimming about upon the smooth waters of the stream. Keeping carefully screened I watched the antics of the young for some time as they half paddled, half ran, in the water at calls from their mother. Now and then she would tip for a luscious pondweed or some other water-growth especially to her liking.

As it generally takes twenty-eight to twenty-nine days for incubation of Mallard eggs, this set was probably about five days old when found.

The young, when hatched, are unable to walk well at first, so the mother bird carries the entire brood, one at a time, to the river. Unfortunately, I was unable to witness this test of parental devotion. In about six weeks the young are able to

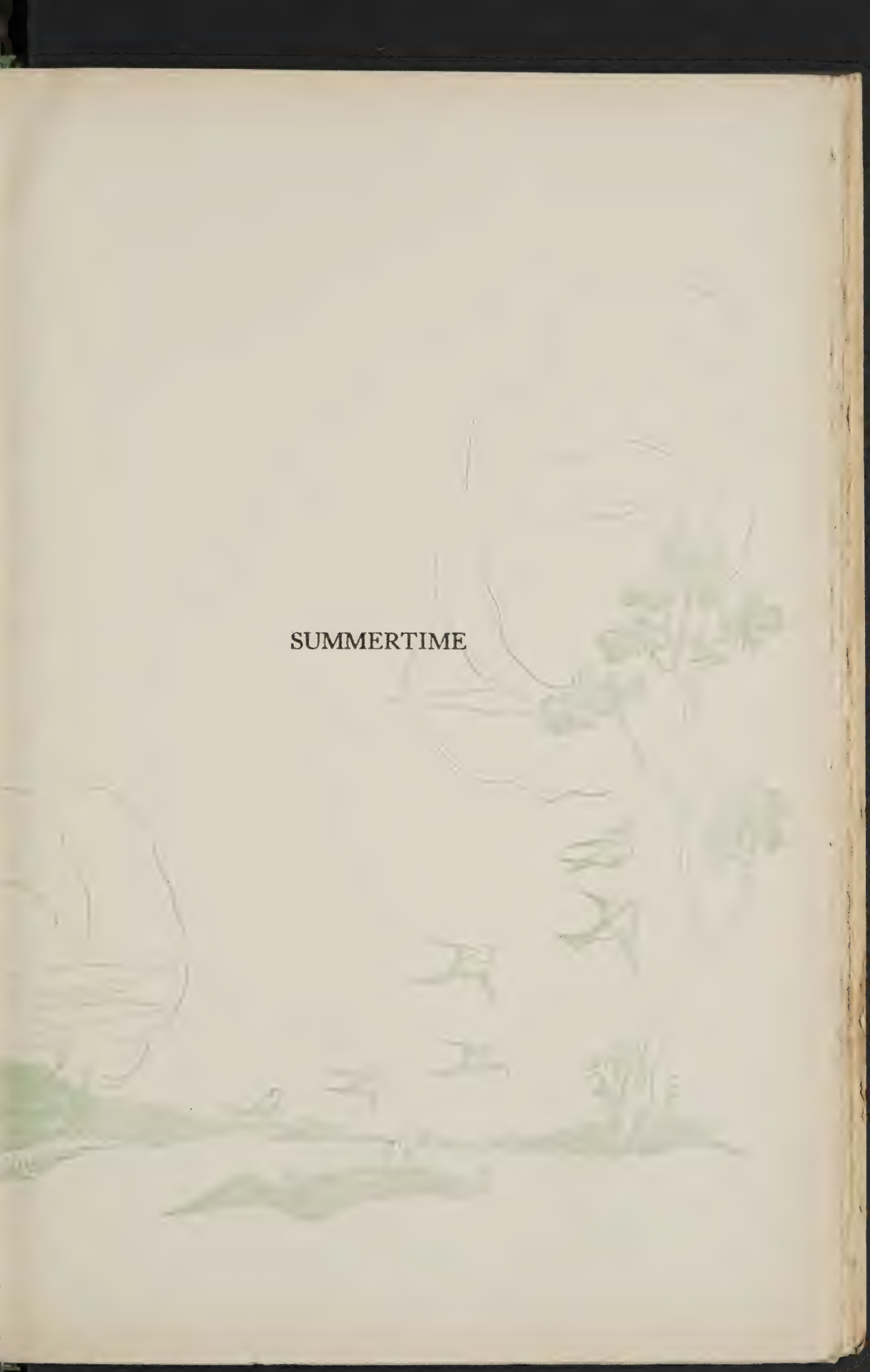
fly, at which time the real trials of the mother begin, for then the young ducks are the especial prey of the duck hawk, the habitual enemy of the duck tribe and other smaller birds.

"In shallows at the channel-edge,
The wild ducks come from North and East
Innumerous gather to the feast.
Oh! far and fast their flight hath been,
From distant stream and marshes green,
Where since the springtime's earliest days
They've linger'd, their young broods to raise,
And now the gusty north winds pour
Their winnowing pinions to our shore."

McLellan.



SUMMERTIME

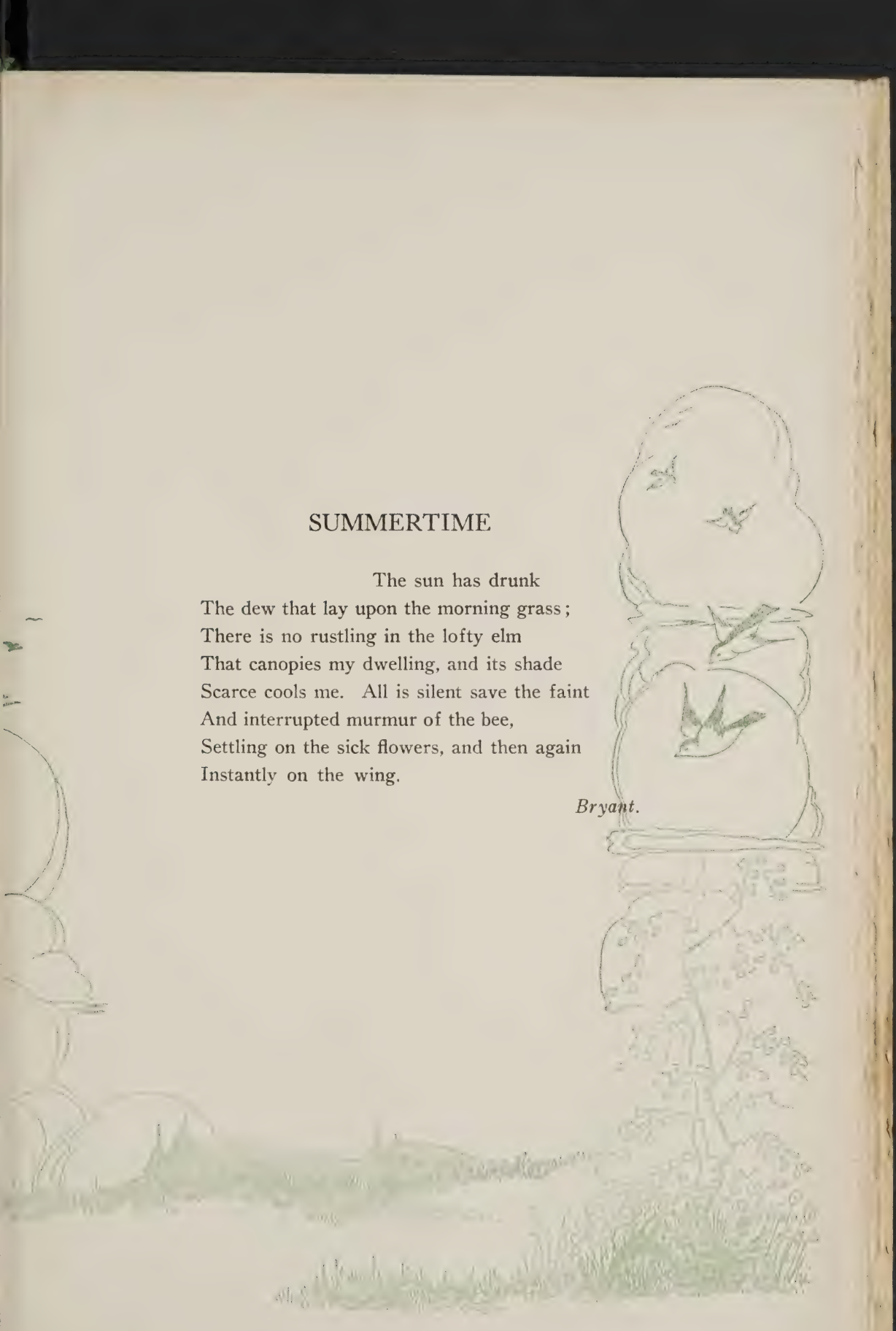




SUMMERTIME

The sun has drunk
The dew that lay upon the morning grass;
There is no rustling in the lofty elm
That canopies my dwelling, and its shade
Scarce cools me. All is silent save the faint
And interrupted murmur of the bee,
Settling on the sick flowers, and then again
Instantly on the wing.

Bryant.





RAMBLES OF A BIRD LOVER

"How plain and height
With dewdrops are bright!
How pearls have crowned
The plants all around!
How sighs the breeze
Through thicket and trees!
How loudly in the sun's clear rays
The sweet birds carol forth their lays!"

Goethe.

NOT far from the confines of Dayton, Ohio, about a twenty-minute ride from the town, is one of the most natural bird regions of the country. The place is an ideal one for the birds. The northern boundary of this spot is formed by a series of small hills thickly wooded and covered by a very heavy undergrowth. To the south and east run rolling meadows and cornfields, while the west side is bordered by a river, the haunt of many shore and wading birds.

One bright, balmy morning in early June, I betook myself to this ornithologist's paradise. As I entered the glen, as it can be called, a rich chorus of bird music filled the air. Through the almost undistinguishable medley I made out the notes of the

cardinal, robin, house wren, crested flycatcher, blue jay, flicker, and red-headed woodpecker, the harsh "chack-chack" of the purple grackle and numerous other notes unrecorded.

As I walked through the woods, I noticed a house wren fly from a hollow limb of a giant sycamore nearby. I quietly investigated, and found that a pair of these tiny birds were busy building a nest in the dead limb. I marked the place for a future visit when the young would be hatched. A pair of robins were busily engaged in building a nest in a black locust tree near the sycamore, preparatory to raising a brood. Not ten feet from the locust and in a clump of bushes I found a brown thrasher's nest containing four bluish eggs, spotted with numerous fine dots of reddish brown. Neither parent bird was in the vicinity, but while I was examining the eggs both birds arrived, so I quickly left the neighborhood of their home, not caring to disturb them during the nesting season.

I walked on slowly, watching every tree and shrub for signs of bird life. About a hundred feet up in a sycamore, a female flicker was hard at work chiseling out a home, while a red-headed woodpecker, a little higher in the same tree, was busily engaged in feeding a hungry nest full of young, as I could tell by their boisterous clamorings. I discovered another

flicker's nest in a small elm. The opening to the nest was not twenty feet from the ground, and as I passed under the tree the female flew out. By some hard climbing, which was all the more difficult because I had not brought my climbing irons, I reached the nest. It contained six beautiful pure white eggs laid upon sawdust chipped from a tree by the bird itself. Making a note of the place I proceeded through the woods.

One certainly could call this place a bird paradise and make no mistake. I had hardly been there an hour when I had already discovered a dozen nests, and seen numerous birds from each family, with great surprises and wonder still in store for me.

By this time I was getting close to the river. I heard the harsh rattle of a king-fisher as he sped across the river, becoming alarmed, I suppose, at my approach. Just above me in a black walnut a cardinal was sounding his "cheo! cheo! cheo!" sounding out his happiness to his brooding mate somewhere in a nearby tangle of grape-vine. Although I flushed the female, I failed, after a diligent search, to find the nest. I had now reached the river, and as I stood gazing at the rippling waters reflecting the early morning sunlight, a great blue heron flew

up the river with a steady dip of broad wings. An object I had noticed while gazing at the river was now opposite me in the middle of the stream. With the aid of my field glasses I made out an American scaup duck, a bird seldom seen in this part of the country. Later on I was told by an authoritative party, that he had found a scaup's nest in this locality, which, if true, is indeed a record, as they are seldom found breeding below the northern tier of states. This find, indeed, is worthy of record.

Walking back from the river again, I was soon in the very thickest part of these delightful woods. The growth in this part is so dense that the sunlight fails to pierce the thick foliage. A clear, plaintive note, "pee-a-wee" greeted my ears from the depth of this shady nook. Again came that clear note, "pee-a-wee," which I consider one of the sweetest notes in all bird-dom. There is something so pure and sincere about this not unmusical call that issues from the throat of one of our smallest flycatchers that I cannot help commenting upon it. Finally, after diligently searching the shadows, I found the source of this particular call, a wood pewee, a quite unassuming gray-coated little fellow, perched on a branch of a tall oak about twenty feet from the ground. Careful searching, however, failed to reveal his mate or a nest.

I have almost neglected to mention one of the main features of this particular morning. In all my bird walks I had never been fortunate enough to discover an indigo bunting's nest. I have seen hundreds of these beautiful birds, and listened to their rather tiresome songs on many a hot August afternoon, when the rest of our songsters were silent and seeking the cool shade of the woods. But this wonderful June morning must have been my lucky one, for I almost stumbled on one of the neatest nests I have ever found. As I passed by some shrubs, a sparrow-like little bird flushed from the midst of them. Such action on the part of a bird aroused my suspicion, which was verified by the finding of the nest. It contained four pale bluish eggs. The nest itself was a cup of grasses, lined with horse hair and fine rootlets. I was not certain of the identity of the owner of this neat little home until I saw the male indigo bunting in company with the bird that had flown the nest, just above me in a small elm, anxiously watching my every move. Not wishing to unnecessarily keep the mother bird from her eggs, I marked the place and withdrew, hoping to be able to peep into the domestic affairs of a pair of indigo buntings a week or so later.

The sun was now sinking low in the western sky, casting golden rays upon the tallest of the forest trees. The evening "prayer" of a wood thrush as he gently thanked for the gifts of another parting day, was the last song I heard as I left the wood.

"From all the misty morning air, there comes a Summer sound,
A murmur as of waters from skies, and trees, and ground.
The birds they sing upon the wing, the pigeons bill and coo."

R. W. Gilder.

THE ROBIN'S MENU

"Now when the primrose makes a splendid show,
And lilies face the March-winds in full blow,
And humbler growths as moved with one desire
Put on, to welcome Spring, their best attire,
Poor Robin is yet flowerless; but how gay
With his red stalks upon this sunny day."

Wordsworth.

THE most abundant, and probably the most universally cherished of all our American birds is the robin. Purely a domestic and fearless bird, the robin rears its young in perfect safety, close to the abode of man, sometimes selecting for its home a projecting ledge above a door. The bird's confidence is seldom misplaced, which tends to make it all the more trustful. Of late years the robin has increased in such large numbers that its natural food is not ample enough to care for the increasing demand. The apprehension is felt that it may become dangerous to our food-producing crops. A few facts regarding the diet of the robin, based upon the most rigid investigation, will not be amiss at this season.

In addition to its most pleasant neighborliness and companionship, the robin performs a most beneficial work for the

farms by preying upon the insects that feed in vast numbers upon the crops. The young of the robin are fed almost entirely upon insects. It is well known that birds are an important factor in keeping in check myriads of insects. Therefore, to destroy a robin or any other kind of bird, means to invite destruction by the insects. Even if a few cherries are eaten by the robin, should it not receive compensation for its warfare upon the insect pests?

About fifty-seven per cent of the robin's diet consists of vegetable matter, and four-fifths of this includes wild fruit. In places where, due to cultivation and improvements, the wild fruits are destroyed, the robin has to adapt itself to the fruit and other food most easily obtained in that locality. This usually consists of the cultivated varieties, consequently devastation of the farmer's crops result. Such cases, however, are not numerous.

The most common complaint against the robin is that it destroys cherries. The birds never take all the fruit, but usually divide with the family, in cases where just a few trees are reared for home use. The robin also damages strawberries, blackberries, and raspberries, and even the larger fruits, such as prunes, peaches, pears and grapes. Its principal vegetable diet, how-

ever, consists of wild fruit, of which about sixty-five varieties are eaten, whereas only about ten of the cultivated ones are consumed. The robin rarely eats grain, which indicates that the cereal is not greatly relished as a means of subsistence.

Over forty per cent of the robin's diet consists of insects. Sharing with the bluebird the distinction of being our earliest migrant, the robin naturally preys upon the insects that first come out of their Winter quarters. A few of the useful predaceous beetles, which are among the first insects to appear in the Spring, form a part of the robin's diet in March and April. During the month of May, wherein they are most abundant, the May beetles offer a delicious morsel. Larvae of the fireflies, which live in the ground, are also eaten. Several species of the weevil, including two clover weevils, the corn weevil and a number of others are eaten during the early months. Bees and wasps are usually avoided by this bird. In April and May, bugs are consumed. The injurious cinch bug is the most interesting member of this genus, which the robin disposes of with relish. The larvae of the March flies, which prey upon the roots of grasses, are also indulged in to a great extent. In one instance a thousand and forty larvae were found in one bird's stomach. The caterpillar forms a regular diet of the robin.

The greatest consumption takes place in May, when it amounts to nearly twenty-four per cent of the food. Grasshoppers are always acceptable as food, but only during the short time that they are most abundant. Certain spiders, snails, angle worms, and sow bugs are eaten, but they form only a small per cent of the diet.

In the matter of the robin's food it can be seen that, while a few useful beetles are eaten in the early Spring, it is not in their destruction that the bird does harm. A bird whose natural supply of fruit is cut off, usually becomes a pest by preying on the cultivated varieties, when obtainable. In some localities the conditions are: too many birds of one species and too little of the natural food supply. Under such circumstances a law permitting the grower to protect his crop would not be out of place. Where the robin visits, he should at least be tolerated in the gathering of his food. The bird's wants do not make of him an enemy, whom we should seek to starve by cutting off his food supply.

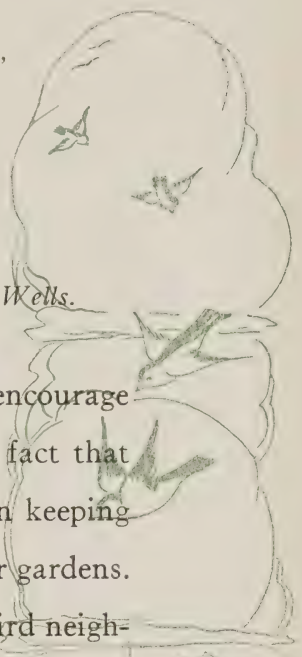
"The sobered robin, hunger-silent now,
Seeks cedar-berries blue, his Autumn cheer."

Lowell.

THE ROBIN AS AN INSECT DESTROYER

"Each morning, when my waking eyes first see,
Through the wreathed lattice, golden day appear,
There sits a robin on an old elm-tree,
And with such stirring music fills my ear,
I might forget that life had pain or fear,
And feel again as I was wont to do,
When hope was young, and life itself were new."

Anna Maria Wells.



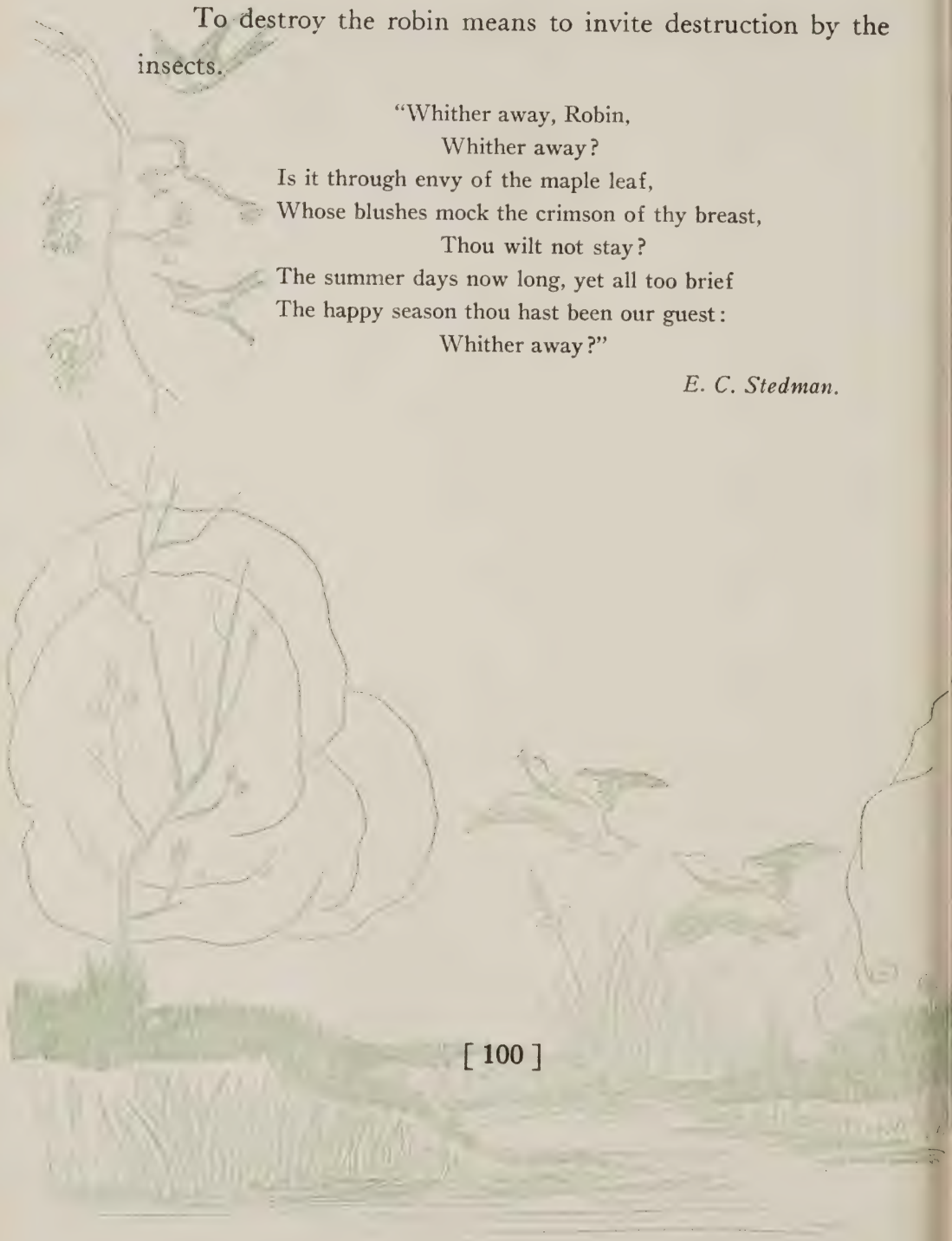
TOO much cannot be done by the bird lover to encourage the robin about his premises. It is a known fact that the robin is one of our most persistent birds in keeping back the insect life that thrives on our trees and in our gardens.

One of our most abundant and yet most useful bird neighbors is the robin. To encourage this pert, democratic bird about our premises, means ample protection against the insects and injurious beetles that infest all gardens and trees. Although accused justly of stealing cherries, the robin more than pays for this depredation by his persistent efforts in ridding our premises of the larvae of insects. His good qualities more than compensate us for the loss of a few cherries.

To destroy the robin means to invite destruction by the insects.

"Whither away, Robin,
Whither away?
Is it through envy of the maple leaf,
Whose blushes mock the crimson of thy breast,
Thou wilt not stay?
The summer days now long, yet all too brief
The happy season thou hast been our guest:
Whither away?"

E. C. Stedman.



THE BLUEBIRD'S REPAST

"Thou first sky-dipped spring-bud of song,
Whose heavenly ecstasy
Foretells the May, while yet March winds are strong,
Fresh faith appears with thee!"

Maurice Thompson.

OFTEN before King Winter has lifted his icy breath from our northern fields and streams, the bluebird, with his sweet song, "trualy, trualy," is proclaiming that Spring is at hand, and rarely is he mistaken in his prophecy.

A very domestic bird is this hardy little creature. He appropriates for his nest, old stumps, deserted woodpecker holes, or boxes that are placed for his use. He rears his young, of which there are often three or four broods, about houses and orchards, and is not at all interested in their safety as far as man is concerned.

Not only for his sweet song and happy nature is the bluebird cherished by all mankind, but he is one of the chief allies of man in his warfare upon destructive insects. During the Spring, Summer and early Fall, the bluebird lives almost entirely upon insects. A single pair of these birds on one farm will do

more good in ridding the place of insects than any artificial means known. The entire diet of the bluebird consists of sixty-eight per cent animal and thirty-eight per cent vegetable food.

The only charge against the bluebird is, that during the early Spring, he destroys great numbers of predaceous beetles. Few birds exceed the bluebirds in the destruction of these insects. The largest consumption of these beetles occurs in May and the least in September.

Beetles of the May-beetle family are eaten extensively during the month of May. They are eaten in nearly every month, but the largest consumption occurs during the three months from May to July. They consist mostly of the small dung beetles, a few snout beetles and a few of the less harmful nature.

A larger per cent of ants are devoured by the bluebird than by the robin. Practically no bees or wasps are on his menu, though flies enter lightly into his diet. A moderate per cent of bugs are also eaten by the bluebird each month.

Caterpillars form a regular article of food for the bluebird. They furnish the greatest food supply in March and the least in December. The cut worms and hairy caterpillars of this species

are the most extensively eaten. The largest item of the bluebird's food consists of orthoptera, grasshoppers, crickets and others of the same species. The insects of this species are harmful and when numerous, are very destructice, as they prey entirely upon the farmer's crops. It seems almost a provision of Nature, that all birds are especially fond of these insects.

Several species of other insects are eaten by the bluebird, such as spiders, which are consumed more extensively by the bluebird, than by the robin, sow bugs, angleworms and snails.

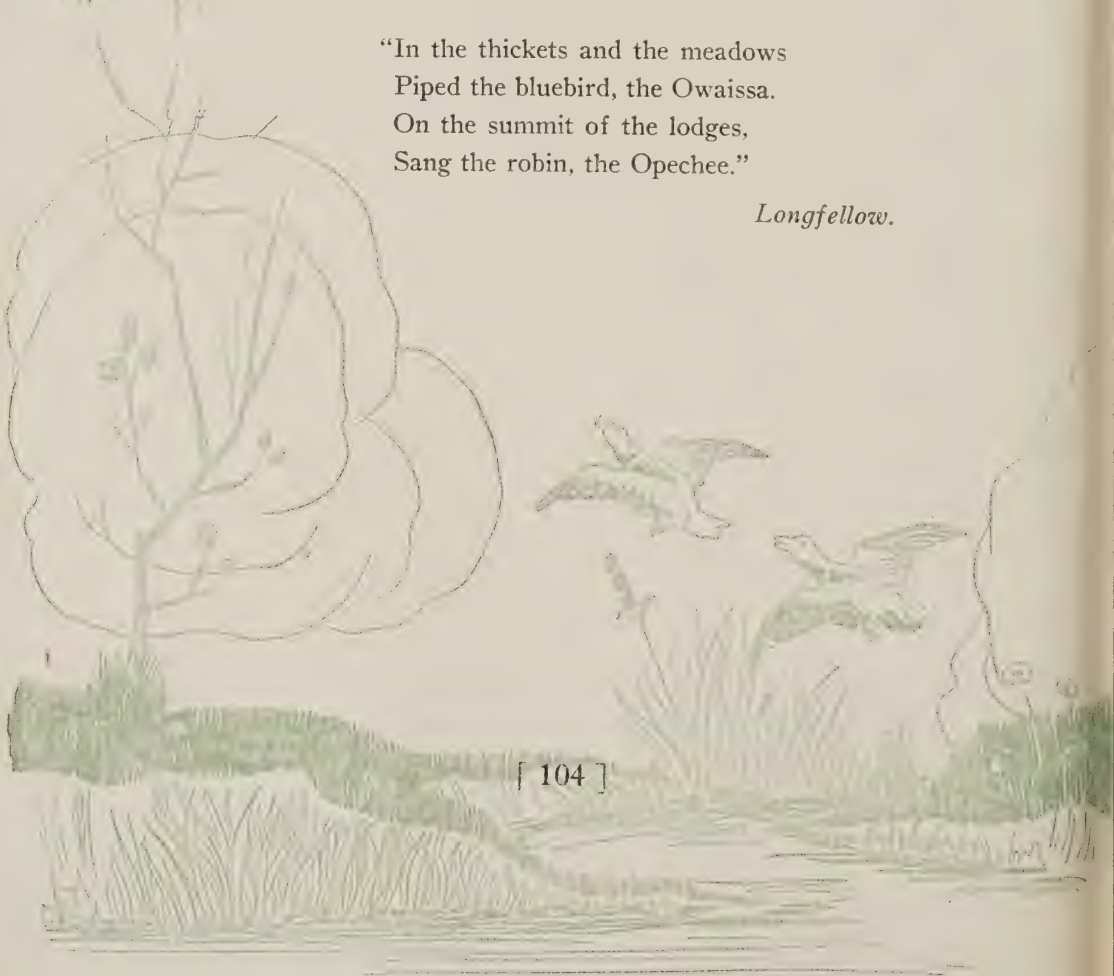
The vegetable diet of the bluebird consists mostly of fruit, of which practically all is of a wild variety. Some cherries, rasperries and blackberries have been identified in different stomachs, but not enough to do any harm. The largest quantity of wild fruit eaten by the bluebird is in December, while in May no fruit of any kind is eaten. The fruit-eating period of the bluebird is not in the Summer, but from October to February, when nearly all the fruit is waste fruit and when species of insects are very scarce. Seeds are seldom, if ever, eaten by the bluebird. A few grains of wheat, bay berry and sumac, complete the seed diet of the bluebird.

Summing up the diet of the bluebird shows that this bird is one of our most valuable insectivorous bipeds and one that

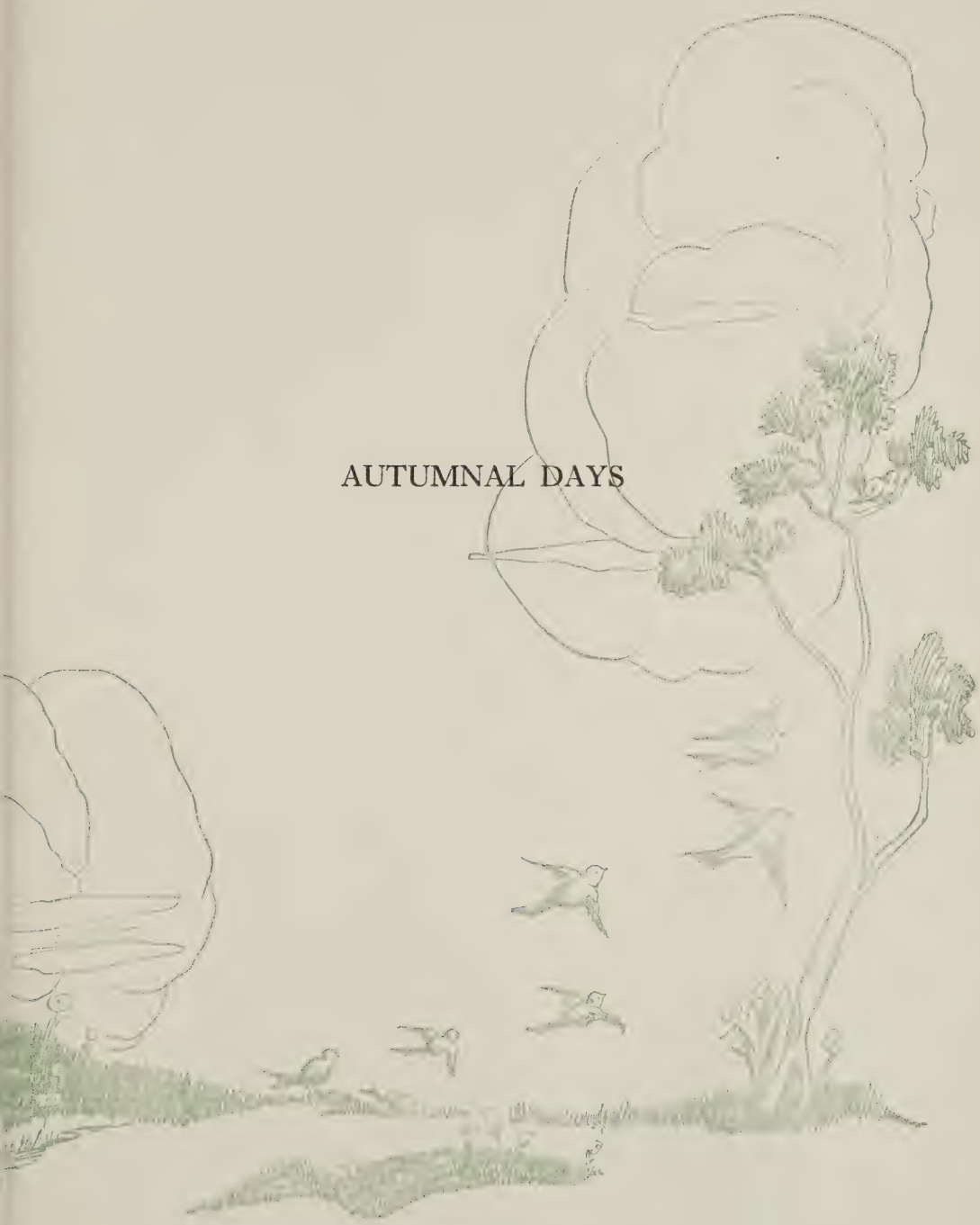
should be encouraged to live near the abode of man, so as to aid him in his extermination of insect pests. When the fruits, such as strawberries, cherries, raspberries, and blackberries are at their best, the bluebird lives upon insects to the extent of four-fifths of its food. Its fruit-eating period is from the late Fall to early Spring. One point, though not of much consequence, is, that the bluebird destroys predacious beetles to a very large extent during the early Spring.

"In the thickets and the meadows
Piped the bluebird, the Owaissa.
On the summit of the lodges,
Sang the robin, the Opechee."

Longfellow.



AUTUMNAL DAYS

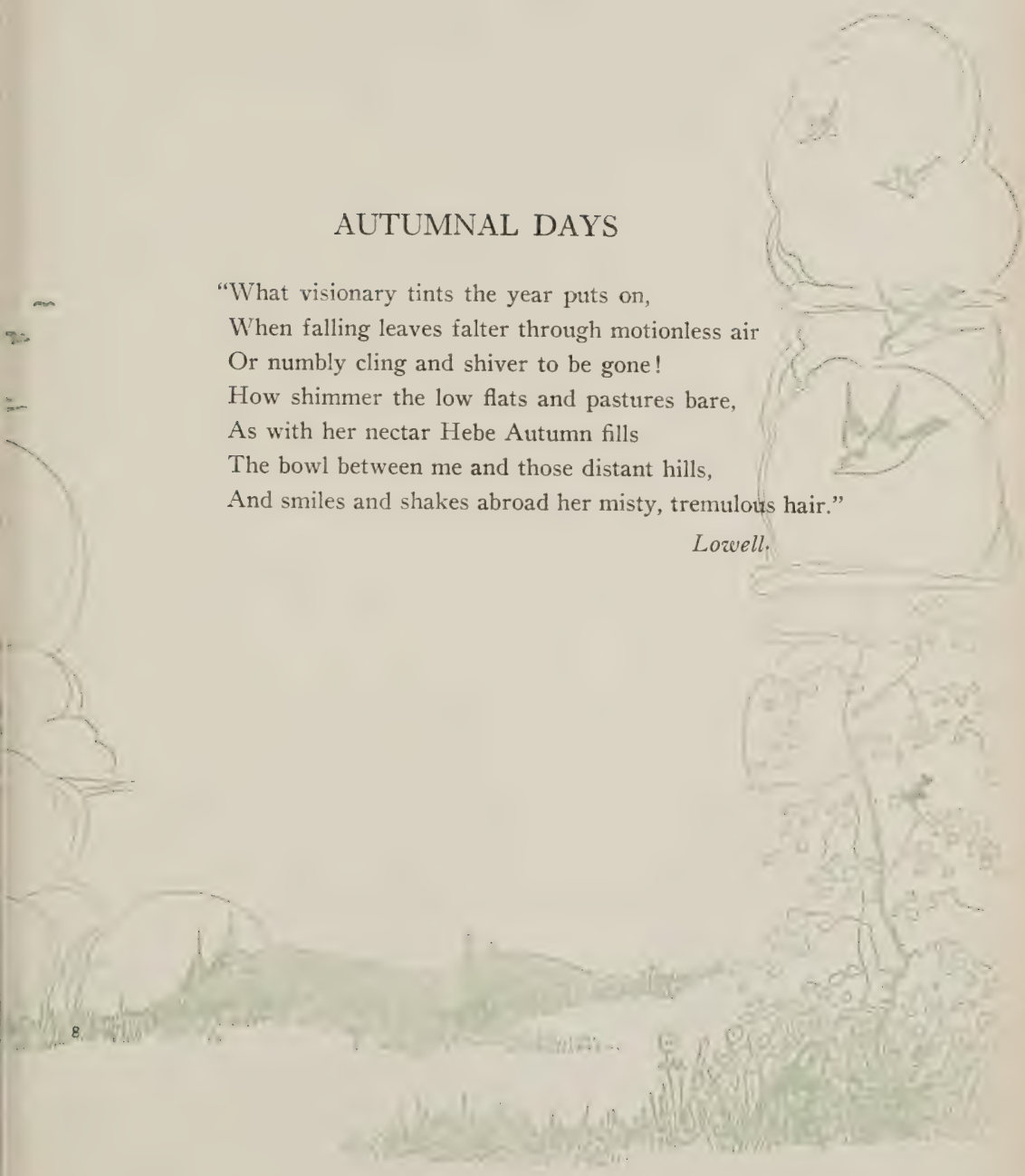




AUTUMNAL DAYS

"What visionary tints the year puts on,
When falling leaves falter through motionless air
Or numbly cling and shiver to be gone!
How shimmer the low flats and pastures bare,
As with her nectar Hebe Autumn fills
The bowl between me and those distant hills,
And smiles and shakes abroad her misty, tremulous hair."

Lowell.





AUTUMN

"I love to wander through the woodlands hoary
In the soft light of an autumnal day
When Summer gathers up her robes of glory
And like a dream of beauty glides away."

Sarah Helen Whitman.

WHAT is more wonderful that a quiet stroll through some beautiful woods on a clear, warm Autumn morning. The air is redolent of the spicy breath of pine trees and the scent of burning leaves.

The hills surrounding the woods are one mass of rich, waving color, of red, russet, gold and yellow, while here and there a vivid patch of green shows where the belligerent attacks of Jack Frost have as yet been unsuccessful. Clumps of purple asters border the roads, while the fields are yellow with golden rod.

Most of our Summer song birds have left for their Winter homes, but the woods are still filled with stragglers and permanent residents. Robins fill the deep woods with their continual chirping, while cardinals, some of the warblers, and wrens, find food in trees and fields. Saucy chickadees, those jolly Winter neighbors, scold from every branch, as though challenging the

right of the rest of their feathered folk to feed on their crimson domain. Nuthatches and titmice hunt together and keep up a merry conversation with all who happen to pass by.

The wonderful color schemes that sweep before one's eyes seem almost impossible to describe. The natural blending of Nature's colors beggars description. I doubt if it would have been possible for the impressionistic Turner to paint such a wonderful scene. Surely no one else need try.

And yet in a few weeks, that slip by only too fast, this wonderful blending of color will be swept away by Winter's icy blasts, and another evolution of Nature will have taken place.

"In warlike pomp, with banners flowing,
The regiments of Autumn stood:
I saw their gold and scarlet glowing
From every hillside, every wood."

Henry Van Dyke.

AFIELD IN OCTOBER

"The Summer's throbbing chant is done
And mute the choral antiphon;
The birds have left the shivering pines
To flit among the trellised vines,
Or fan the air with scented plumes
Amid the love-sick orange blooms,
And thou art here alone,—alone,
Sing little bird; the rest have flown."

O. W. Holmes.

I KNOW of nothing more fascinating or exhilarating, than a stroll through some quiet woods on a beautiful, crisp October morning. With a couple of younger brother bird-enthusiasts and armed with field glasses and note books, we started out early, one October morning, for a densely-wooded hill just south of town. In half an hour we were well away from the city's glamour and noise, and inhaling the pure autumnal air.

All about us was evidence of Jack Frost's belligerent efforts. The fields, a month before green, and fragrant and full of birds, were now withered and sure proof of the wonderful evolution of Nature. Here and there clumps of purple New England asters asserted their rights to live their short existence, while slender golden rods nodded to the October winds. The

hills, as we approached them, appeared through our glasses one mass of rich undulating color, vivid and startling against the deep blue of the sky beyond.

"Dee-dee-dee-chick, a-dee-dee!" "Do you hear that, Tom?" "Yes, but I don't see him." Again came the clear, saucy, scolding notes just over our heads. "I see him!" called Jack. Sure enough, there he was, a black-capped chickadee, hanging from the end of a branch of a small sapling, sending out his scolding notes and fairly bubbling over with good nature. "Don't they ever go south?" inquired Jack. "No, they are one of our very few resident birds, and help share the long Winter with us," I answered.

Mr. Chick hopped a few feet closer, his black cap bobbing here and there. He certainly was a bundle of nerves. Now on one limb, then on another, hunting for small insects and spider eggs that he might find lurking beneath the bark.

"Well, that's number one for this morning," remarked Tom as he made a note in his book.

We had proceeded but a few yards when a nasal, "yank-yank" greeted our ears, and looking up we saw the author of this queer sound, peering down upon us from the under-side of an oak limb.

"I know what kind of a bird that is," yelled Jack. "All right, let's have it," Tom and I chorused. White-breasted nuthatch," said Jack.

"That's what he is, and a beautiful bird at that, with his bluish-black crown and blue-gray back. Another of our resident birds who helps lift the burden of our long Winter days. Notice how he goes down the tree trunk head downward. His tail is short and square which enables him to balance himself perfectly."

Another "yank-yank, ya-ya," as if to inquire why our intrusion on his domain and he was off for another tree in a distant part of the woods.

We now approached an opening through the trees, a small swampy patch of rank weeds and undergrowth. A bird flew up from a pool of water where it had been bathing, and darted into the bushes.

"Did you see him?" asked Tom.

"Yes," I answered, "looked like some kind of a sparrow, but I'm not sure."

While we were standing there waiting for him to come out, the bird accommodated us by flying into the open where he

gave us all a good view of himself. "Isn't he a beauty?" whispered Jack, peering through his glasses.

"Do either of you know what he is?" I queried.

"Looks something like a sparrow; all but his head and throat," said Tom.

"Well, he belongs to the sparrow family, and his white throat proclaims him to be the white-throated sparrow. He is rarely seen here during the Winter, but is quite common in the Spring and Summer months. He is now probably on his migration to a warmer clime. They say he is the handsomest of our sparrows. His call is sharp, high-pitched, and a very clear and sweet whistle, 'peabody bird'." But all we heard was his call note when alarmed. He now flew down and began busily to hunt for breakfast or probably lunch, as his breakfast time was over, and so we left him to the task.

"Third one this morning," yelled Jack, "and it isn't eight o'clock yet. Pretty good, isn't it, for a half-hour's walk?"

"Not so bad for this time of the year," I replied.

We were just crossing a shallow brook bordered by a clump of willows when Jack stopped short. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" inquired Tom and myself.

Just then a few scarcely audible weak chirps reached our

ears. They came from the willows so we immediately proceeded toward them in hopes of locating the owner of the mysterious notes. After a few minutes of anxious searching we all located the bird at about the same instant. To tell the truth, I did not know what he was, as I could only see his breast and there were no distinguishing marks about it, until he bent low over the twig in his search for food, and then I discerned his beautiful golden crown and knew him to be a golden-crowned kinglet, a very pretty little bird a trifle smaller than the warblers.

"I know what he is," I exclaimed, and I had the two of my companions greatly excited until I let them in on the mystery. This had only been their second time out on a bird study expedition, hence their ignorance of some of the more common birds.

"Does he stay with us the entire year?" asked Jack.

"No," I answered, he is only a Winter resident and arrives here about this time, but leaves again in April for the mountain regions and spruce forests of our northern states where he breeds. He is a very hardy little bird and endures our most severe Winters with evident relish."

"There is a robin," remarked Tom, as we were climbing a steep hill for a short cut to another part of the woods.

"Did you say that was a robin, Tom?"

"Sure, don't you see him over there among those dead leaves near that clump of bushes?" A hardy outburst of laughter greeted our ears, and we saw Jack with glasses levelled at the bird.

"Why, I know what he is," he exclaimed and again he laughed as he saw the chagrin of disappointment on Tom's countenance.

"That's a towhee, isn't it, Dick?" addressing me.

"It's a towhee alright, but how did you know it?"

"Oh, I remembered a description I read of a bird, some time ago, and how easily it can be mistaken for a robin," he nodded mischievously toward Tom who was busily engaged in watching the actions of said towhee, and acting as though he did not hear the last remarks. Just then a clear, "tow-hee-ee" rang through the woods, and our bird flew up to a low-hanging branch of a small sapling and answered a "chewing-chewing" from which he also derives his name of chewink.

The towhee is not usually a resident, but he leaves for other climes about the first of November, although males are sometimes seen in these parts the year around.

As we were descending the hill on our homeward journey a sharp "peenk, peenk, peenk," reached our ears from an oak

tree about fifty feet ahead of us. We cautiously advanced toward the tree and after a few minutes' search, discovered a downy woodpecker about half-way up the tree, busily engaged in searching for spiders' eggs, and larvae, that do more or less harm to the trees.

Both of my companions knew the diminutive downy through their bird guides, and both were anxious to make his acquaintance face to face.

He is another one of our permanent residents and stays with us throughout the Winter, even visiting our houses in places where he is fed.

After explaining the little I know of Mr. Downie's habits, we proceeded toward home, and after a delightful and thoroughly educational walk, it can be imagined what we did to a good lunch that awaited us when we arrived home.

"No loud, high notes for tender days like these!
No trumpet tones, no swelling words of pride
Beneath these skies, so like dim Summer seas,
Where hazy ships of cloud at anchor ride.
At peace are earth and sky, while softly fall
The brown leaves at my feet; a holy palm
Rests in a benediction over all,
O silent peace! O days of silent calm."

Ellen P. Allertan.

"OLD HEAD HUNTER"

"In the hollow tree, in the old gray tower
The spectral owl doth dwell;
Dull, hated, despised, in the sunshine hour,
But at dusk—he's abroad and well!
Not a bird of the forest e'er mates with him—
All mark him outright, by day:
But at night, when the woods grow still and dim,
The boldest will shrink away!
O when night falls, and roosts the fowl,
Then, then, is the reign of the Horned Owl."

Barry Cornwall.

IT was a brilliant, starry night, in early Autumn. A full moon rode high in the vaulted heavens and shed its rich, mellow rays over fields and forests, where, filtering through the leaves of the dark and silent trees it cast fantastic splotches of light upon the woodland paths. The chirp of crickets and the monotonous drone of numerous other nocturnal insects still filled the air, while the occasional call of some night bird startled the intruder with its weird and mysterious sounds.

During a lull in the insect serenade there came floating upon the crisp night wind the hoarse, discordant hoot of a great Horned Owl in the distance. Scarcely audible at first, it rose

in sound and volume until all the furry nightfolk of the forest scampered in terror to places of safety, as well as they might. They knew the prowess and hunting ability of "Old Head Hunter," as the folks in the neighboring village called this wraith-like bird, because of numerous depredations committed on their poultry yards and dove cotes; taking only the heads of his victims, as the brains were the tid-bits he delighted in. Again "Old Head Hunter" was preparing to exact his nightly toll from among the smaller denizens of the forest.

In almost uncanny silence, on swift, hawk-like wings, he came sailing through the woodland and alighted on the dead branch of a towering oak, from where he made his sallies upon his unfortunate victims. A deep-toned, "to-whoo-hoo-hoo, to-whoo-hoo," that sounded like a muffled roll of thunder, startled the furry folk, and again sent them scampering to places of safety. But, one poor, unfortunate little mouse, probably a bit bolder than the rest, ventured too far from his place of safety, and before it had time to escape, the claws of "Old Head Hunter" had sunk into his back; with a squeal of terror, the mouse was borne in triumph to the dead oak limb, where the great horned owl, for such "Old Head Hunter" was, began to

devour his victim. With his powerful beak he ripped the head from the body. Another rip and he laid bare the brains, which he gulped down with evident relish.

"Old Head Hunter," unlike the rest of his tribe, was not content with devouring his victims, but only delighted in eating their brains, so that he always kept up a relentless attack on the quail, grouse, snipe, rats, squirrels, mice, chickens, turkeys, in short, about everything he could kill. His nightly toll was between ten and twenty victims, and the neighboring villages, unwilling to tamely submit to his maraudings upon their poultry coops, offered rewards for his body. But "Old Head Hunter" was too wary for all of them, and invariably eluded their most cunning schemes to capture or to kill him.

In another part of the forest all was serene and calm. A break among the stately trees permitted a flood of light to silver the ground. In this spot a mother rabbit was giving her half-grown children their evening exercise. Running about, gamboling over the rich carpet of fallen leaves, the young cotton tails were having, oblivious to all impending danger, a delightful time. Suddenly a great, ominous shadow poised over them. The mother rabbit squeaked her call of alarm, but too late! A short scuffle, a clapping of huge wings, and one of the little

family fell victim to the ravenous maw of "Old Head Hunter," who sallied silently back to his perch to devour his latest prize. Where only a few minutes before peace and freedom dwelt, now a poor mother was mourning the loss of one of her young, powerless to avenge its untimely death. The brains of the young rabbit only served to whet "Old Head Hunter's" appetite, and with another long and weird hoot he was off in search of another victim, which this time happened to be a large rat that momentarily exposed himself as he ran across a moonlit space near a farm yard. In a few seconds the rodent was beheaded and the brains devoured. A pigeon straggler in a dove cote near the scene of the last tragedy was the next to fall prey to the rapacious bird of the night. "Old Head Hunter" was fairly gloating in blood. The terror of the woods was in his glory.

Having feasted on the pigeon brain, "Old Head Hunter," not wishing to take any more chances in such close proximity to human habitation, sailed back toward the woods in search of another variety of "brain special." He had not long to wait.

In a marshy bog that bordered his domain, a small flock of ducks had paused for rest and food on their long migrations southward. His sharp ears caught their squawks of contentedness as they settled for the night; his piercing eyes discerned

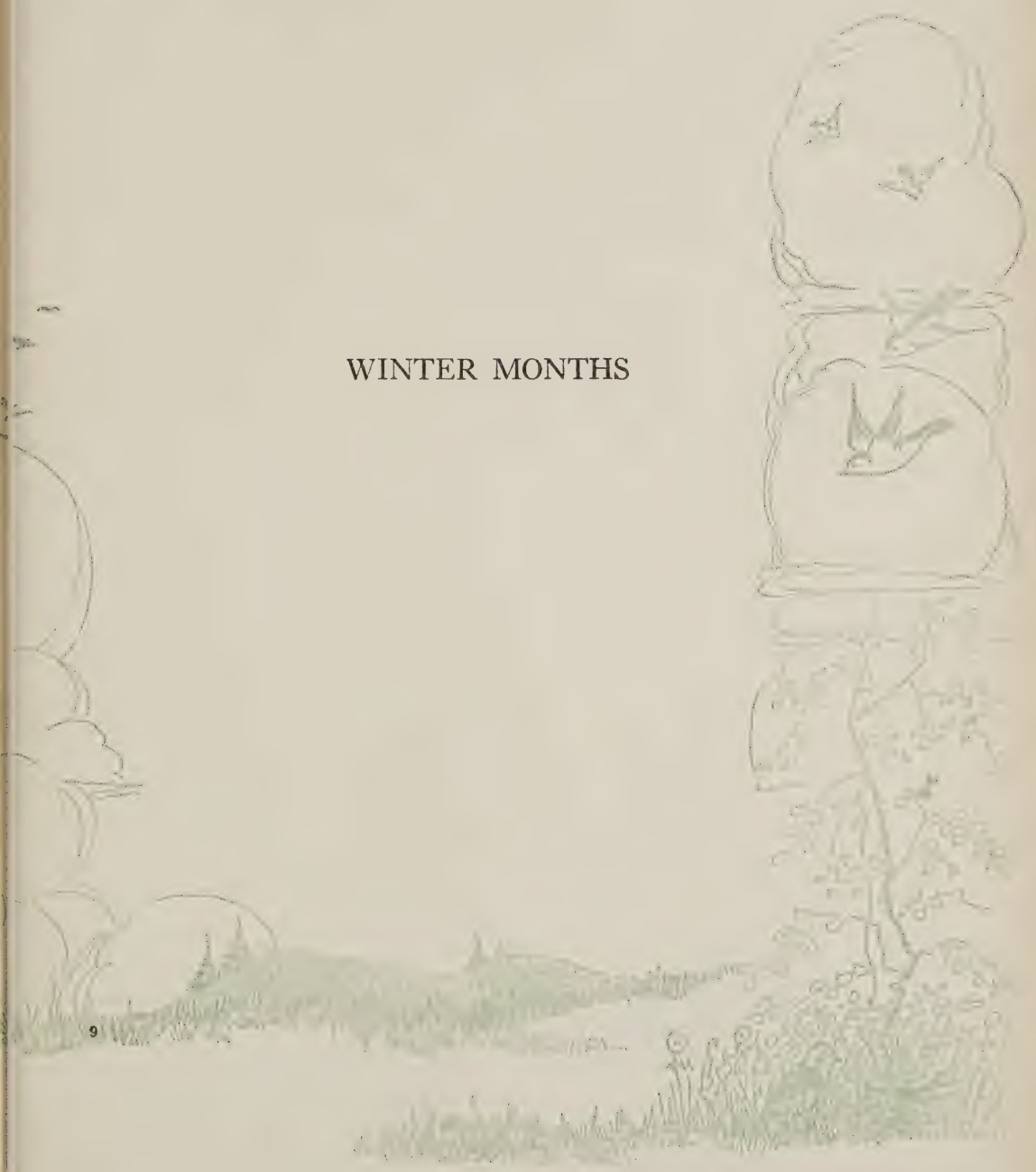
them among the reeds, and swooping with a rush he descended upon the flock and his sharp claws tore into the soft back of a Mallard duck. With a cry of terror the unfortunate bird was borne to "Old Head Hunter's" perch, where he speedily went the way of his predecessors.

Just as "rosy-fingered dawn" was tinting the eastern sky the Great Horned Owl disposed of his last victim, a song sparrow that had stirred out a little too early. As the darkness of the forest gave way to the gray twilight of the early morning, he slowly and silently sailed away to his home, somewhere in the depths of the tamarack swamp, where he still lives unmolested and unavenged. He builded wisely, as the approach to his castle, owing to the tangled undergrowth and insecure footing, is almost impassible for human pursuers.

"So, when the night falls, and dogs do howl,
Sing, Ho! for the reign of the Horned Owl!
We know not alway
Who are Kings by day;
But the King of the night is the bold brown Owl."

Barry Cornwall.

WINTER MONTHS





WINTER MONTHS

"His breath like silver arrows pierced the air,
The naked earth crouched shuddering at his feet,
His finger on all flowing waters sweet
Forbidding lay-motion nor sound was there:—
Nature was frozen dead,—and still and slow,
A winding sheet fell o'er her body fair,
Flaky and soft, from his wide wings of snow."

Frances Anne Kemble.



OUR FEATHERED WINTER RESIDENTS

"O cheery bird of Winter cold,
I bless thy every feather;
Thy voice brings back dear boyhood days,
When we were gay together."

Burroughs.

AS the last lingering days of late Summer merge into the flaming glory of those of early Autumn, most of our feathered songsters begin their migrations to warmer climes. Great flocks of blackbirds, meadow larks and robins may be seen wending their way southward, intermingling in perfect peace and contentment as they stop at intervals on their long journey, for food and drink.

While these, and thousands of others of our feathered neighbors, take up their Winter residence in warmer latitudes, the more hardy of our birds are preparing for the season of cold weather in practically the same localities where they raised their broods or sang their ditties of love during the Spring and Summer. They seek the evergreen woods, or appropriate the clefts and crevices of decaying deciduous trees. Hardy birds as they are, these retreats amply protect them from the icy blasts of Winter, even though the struggle for existence is a precarious one.

One of the most common of our Winter residents is the chickadee. This diminutive ball of good cheer is about an inch smaller than the English sparrow. He is quite distinguished in appearance. The crown of his head, nape and throat, are black. A white space beginning at the base of its bill spreads over the cheeks, widening over the upper part of the breast until it forms a collar around his neck. Underneath is a dirty grayish white, and a rusty brown wash on both sides. The wings and tail are gray, with white etchings.

No seeker of fair weather is this jolly little bird, and you have probably heard, on more than one occasion, his plaintive, "chickadee-dee-dee-dee" outside your window when a snow-storm was at its height.

The chickadee is one of our most friendly feathered neighbors. His confidence can easily be gained, whereupon he remains a life-long friend, coming every Winter, to help cheer up through the long, weary months. A great aid in trying to gain his confidence is by placing food, such as finely cracked oats, wheat or minced meat, in sheltered places. A piece of suet tied to the limb of a tree, or a raw bone hung from an evergreen bough will, nevertheless, always be appreciated.

The chickadee, however, serves a more useful purpose than trying to cheer faint-hearted humanity. It is the well known and destructive enemy to the canker worm moth, and it is estimated the chickadee eats over a hundred thousand eggs in the twenty-five days it takes this moth to crawl up the trees. It may readily be seen that it pays to protect the chickadee in Winter for the good deeds he performs in Summer.

Another of our permanent feathered residents is the white-breasted nuthatch. A hunter of the deep, silent pine woods is this fearless little acrobat. He is a trifle smaller than the English sparrow. The top of his head and nape are black, while his back is slate-colored. The wings, of a dark slate, are tipped with black, which fades to brown. The tail feathers are brownish black with white bars. The sides of the head are white. The body, underneath, is at first a white, but shades to a pale red under the tail.

Probably you have seen him while walking through the woods on a cold Winter's day, running along the branch of some tree; now on the underside, again on top, busily engaged in breaking up little pieces of bark, searching for spider's eggs. At your approach he pauses in his work and peers fearlessly

down at you, as if to inquire why you intrude on his domain. Only a few moments, and seeing that you intend no harm, he resumes his task of destroying larvae.

The most frigid weather has no terrors for this hardy little "tree mouse," as he is sometimes called. His cheery "quank, quank, hank, hank," may be heard while the mercury hovers at zero and the snow hurls through his feeding grounds. He is usually seen in company with the titmice, chickadees, kinglets and brown creepers.

Closely related to the white-breasted nuthatch is his red-breasted cousin of the same name. Lead-colored above, he has brownish wings and tail. The head and neck are black; likewise the chin and shoulders. A white stripe passes through the eye to the shoulder. The under part is light and rusty red. The tail feathers are barred with white and edged with pale brown.

This tiny Winter resident is easily distinguished from his larger cousin by his red breast. The red-breasted nuthatch is generally seen in company with his relatives, the white breast and the brown creeper, while the ruby-crowned kinglet and the chickadees are not barred from his society.

Like the larger relative, the red-breasted nuthatch has the habit of darting along the boughs of trees and running along the underside. The common note of this bird somewhat resembles that of the white breast, but it is higher pitched and uttered at more frequent intervals.

A near relative of the chickadee is the bold, little, tufted titmouse. It is about the size of the English sparrow. It has a crest which is high and pointed, and is ashy-blue in color. Ash-gray or leaden is its coat. The wings and tail are very dark, and the shoulders are black. The sides of the head are a dirty white, while those of the body are a yellowish-white, tinted with red.

Although very diminutive in size, this pert and dainty little bird resembles the blue jay in miniature, minus the latter's gaudy color. Here is the leader of the Winter bird troupe. His call of "cheevy, cheevy," is one of the most familiar sounds in the Winter woods. Hopping ahead of you, he always sees to it that you are not lonely on your Winter afternoon's walk. Leading you farther and farther into the woods, constantly hopping from twig to twig a few feet above your head, he is always cheering you on.

The tufted titmouse is especially valuable and much respected for the number of insects he destroys during the Fall and Winter months.

Probably one of our least known Winter residents is the brown creeper. Like the tufted titmouse, he is about the size of the English sparrow, brown above, and with ashy-gray stripes, and small, oval-shaped gray mottles. Color is rather light on his head, increasing in shade to redish-brown near the tail; the wings are brown, and underneath are covered with a gray-white. A slender, curving bill ornaments the creeper.

This scrupulous little worker is the very embodiment of persistent diligence. He is usually seen in company with the nuthatches, the chickadees and the kinglets, but at times becomes rather solitary, preferring to be alone. He is precision itself, in the manner of obtaining food; beginning at the foot of some rough-barked tree, he silently climbs upward in a sort of spiral fashion, now lost to sight on one side, then appearing just where he is expected to, on the other. It takes him just about fifty seconds to finish a tree, with all his painstaking care. Then off again to the foot of another tree, he repeats his spiral methods throughout the livelong day.

At times, while clinging with frozen toes to some trees, he still finds time to utter his repertory of pleasing notes which are distinctly characteristic of him. The brown-creeper's plumage is an extraordinary feat of imitation; being an exact reproduction of the tree bark on which he lives.

Another one of our permanent residents is the golden-crowned kinglet. He is about one-half the size of the English sparrow. His crown patch is of a bright orange or flame color, bordered by yellow, and enclosed by a black line. The upper parts of the body are of a grayish-olive hue. The wings and tail are dusky, bordered by olive green, which underneath is grayish white.

When Autumn is in all her colored splendor, and Dame Nature lavishes the hillsides with dashes of rich red and yellow coloring, this little bit of bird life arrives, to share with us our Winter. He is a veritable bundle of nerves, constantly flitting about the twigs of some tree, searching the bark for hidden insects, fluttering his wings and scarcely giving you a chance to distinguish him, until you discern his flaming crown. Zero weather is immaterial to him, and with evident relish of the cold he calls out his shrill "zee, zee, zee," from the pines and spruce. Although usually seen in the company of the brown

creeper, the kinglet has none of his energy, and rather inclines to take things easier. Like the nuthatches, he can hang upside down from any limb, and pick off an insect with the skill of any of his neighbors.

The hairy woodpecker is one of the most diligent workers of the Winter troop. He is about the size of a robin, black and white above, with white below. A bright red patch is on the nape of his neck, and the wings are striped and dashed with black and white. The outer tail feathers are white, without bars. A white stripe is about the eyes, and on the sides of the head.

We all know the bill of the woodpecker is well adapted for its work. Its business in life is to protect the tree by destroying the insects that lurk beneath their bark. In any kind of weather this faithful bird may be seen clinging to the trunk of some tree, busily engaged in plying his vocation. We naturally associate this hardy bird with the Winter weather, for by his very nature he is able to obtain an abundant food supply much more readily than most of the other non-migratory birds, which makes him free from the depressing spirit of the season. He is in the happiest of moods during the blackest weather. In the search

for hidden worms and larvae, it seems as if the hairy woodpecker depends upon the sense of hearing to detect his prey. A "tap, tap, tap," is followed by a pause, as if he is trying to detect the escape of some hidden insect, and he is very persistent in his efforts. This bird is very independent, and is rarely seen in the company of any of his neighbors, although, at times, he may join a group of chickadees, kinglets, nuthatches and creepers.

The hairy woodpecker is a drummer, not a singer, but his steady "tap, tap," upon some resonant bough is a pleasing sound as one enters and wanders through the wood on a dismal Winter's day.

The downy woodpecker is another of our Winter residents. He is similar in color and shape to his relative, the hairy woodpecker, but not quite as large. He is about the size of the English sparrow, black above, and striped with white. The tail is wedge-shaped, and the tail feathers are white, barred with white. A black stripe appears on the top of the head and a distinct white band over the eyes, with a red patch on the side of the neck. The wings have numerous bands crossing them with white underneath.

The downy woodpecker is one of our most confiding species of birds. He is fearless and full of curiosity, too; and one of the most devoted members of the Winter band.

He begins his tireless efforts of life, by searching for insects at the bottom of some tree, working his way around it and climbing spirally, then working one branch after another until he has finished the tree. He burrows deeply into the wood, but does practically no harm, as his work is mostly all in the decayed parts, where the worms are to be found. His work is, in fact, of inestimable value to the tree, as he destroys its real enemies. As he flits from tree to tree he utters a characteristic "pink" or "wink," sometimes a rattling call which is scarcely distinguishable from that of the hairy variety, although less in volume and of a more pleasing quality.

Among his other qualities, the downy woodpecker is very friendly, and is sometimes seen pecking away at some hollow limb just outside your window. He very often visits villages, frequently the trees on the streets, or the fruit trees of the back yards.

A member of one of the largest bird families is the tree sparrow. He is one of our most friendly companions as we plod through a field on a cold Winter's day. He is about the

size of the English sparrow. The crown is of bright chestnut. A gray line passes over the cheek, and the throat and breast are gray. The back is brown, the feathers have edges of black and buff; the wings are dusky, with two whitish bars across them. The tail feathers are brown, bordered with grayish white.

Under some unburied weed patch, in a field piled high with snowdrifts, a flock of these cold-defying, hardy little birds will keep up a constant twittering, as if trying to dissipate the cold Winter's weariness.

The tree sparrow is one of the most numerous birds to be found during the Winter season; flocks of them of from a dozen to two or three hundred, are common in localities where weed fields are abundant.

By his name one might imply that the bird lives in trees, but on the contrary, he is seldom seen there, preferring the small, low bushes and usually wood patches, for his home. His song is sweet, melodious, "Swee-ho, tweet, tweet," that may be heard on any mild Winter's day.

The cardinal is not a permanent Winter resident of the north, but he is a frequent visitor. He is a trifle smaller than the robin. Brilliant cardinal in color, gives the bird his name.

His chin and a band around his bill are black. His beak is stout and red, and his wings are grayish colored during the Winter.

What is more beautiful, on a Winter landscape, when the earth is clothed in a thick mantle of snow, and the evergreens droop heavily under their burden of fleecy whiteness, than the red flashes of a little group of cardinals in some cedar tree, contrasting strongly against the richness of their surroundings? When the Winter is very severe and food is scarce, this haughty little aristocrat of birddom will often deign to mingle with the chickadees and nuthatches, sharing the food that was placed for them by some bird lover.

The cardinal is seldom seen permanently located in one place during the Winter. He usually roams about in flocks of his own species, continuing on through places where he can make his way. Endowed by Nature with a wonderful voice, the cardinal is sometimes called the "Virginia nightingale," but his rich "choo," is seldom heard during the short Winter days.

The blue jay is another of our well-known birds which shares the Winter months with us. He is somewhat larger than the robin. With blue above, a black band around the neck, he is a grayish-white underneath. The wing coverts and tail

are bright blue and barred with black stripes. The head is finely crested. The bill, tongue and legs are black. This bold ravisher of bird nests is, perhaps, one of the finest colored of all our birds. He usually travels in flocks of some twelve to a hundred of his own species. Like the cardinal, he seldom remains in one locality during the Winter months, preferring to travel on, hunting better and happier feeding grounds as he goes on. When hard pressed for food, however, he boldly mixes with the chickadees that congregate in our yards, to partake of the suet, chopped meats and cracked wheat that is provided for them.

The blue jay's voice is anything but musical, and his harsh screams and shrieks seem sometimes to drown the voices of his more gifted fellow-creatures.

I have said nothing in this paper of the game birds that are always with us, but that is a subject for a future effort.

"But cheerily the chickadee
Singeth to me on fence and tree;
The snow sails round him as he sings,
White as the down of angels' wings."

Trowbridge.



A WINTER'S WALK IN HIGHWOOD

"Under the snowdrifts the blossoms are sleeping,
Dreaming their dreams of sunshine and June,
Down in the hush of their quiet they're keeping
Trills from the throstle's wild summer-sung tune."

Harriet Prescott Spofford.

I WAS fourteen years of age and Bud was twelve, when we received our first shotguns. I am nearly sixteen now, but I look back to the event as the first great episode of our lives. We had wished for guns from the time we knew what hunting was, and that was long, long ago; for the love of outdoor sport came to us through heredity and environment. Dad was Nimrod of old and many were the stories he told us of sports afield when we were small boys, which made our trigger-fingers tingle, and our blood surge to the surface in anticipation of like experiences.

Our guns were single-barreled 16-gauge, breech loaders, bored for nitro powder. We received them two days before the close of the quail and rabbit season, so we importuned Dad to take us out before the season closed.

Accordingly, on December fourth, we boarded the six o'clock traction for York, a little town a few miles distant.

After reaching York we walked about two miles until we arrived at the farm of a relative where we intended to do our hunting.

The place was called Highwood, a very appropriate name, considering its wooded hills and undulating fields. Highwood is one of the most ideal spots near town and appeals to all who have the love of outdoors at heart. The house, which is used as a Summer home for the family, is situated on a little knoll overlooking a small creek. A rustic bridge crosses the stream and leads up to the house of the tenant. On the east and west were large cornfields, while here and there amongst the stalks, a golden pumpkin showed a yellow face. The creek which ran past the house widened down below, and formed a little, transparent pool in a ravine, which was bordered by locust and willow trees.

As soon as we reached the cozy house, we built a roaring fire in the old-time fireplace, to warm ourselves. Having assembled our guns, we filled our pockets with shells, and were ready for our first experience with a shotgun. I almost forgot to say, we took our pointer, Toby, with us, for we had seen several bevies of quail in the coverts north of the house, during the previous Summer.

A light snow had fallen the night before, making the tracking of rabbits comparatively easy. The snow was not so good for the dog's nose, however, but on a snowy day the quail do not fly so far, so we were at no disadvantage. The tracks of many rabbits showed that this game, at least, was plentiful. We had been walking about half an hour when Bud, who was a little to the rear of us, yelled out: "There goes a rabbit!" and to the left a little white streak went skimming along the stubble, followed by a charge of shot from Bud's gun, which did not affect the bunny's progress in the least. I then shot, and still he kept going at a lightning-like pace. Dad whistled and called, but Toby did not return, so we decided that he must be somewhere on point. We went over to the covert, a short distance away, and there, to Bud's and my surprise, Toby was standing rigid as a statue. Dad went in and flushed the birds, but we were too excited to shoot, because of the loud whirr, whirr, whirr of the birds as they flushed. We marked the singles, however, as they alighted, and soon Toby had another point. Dad flushed the bird and as it arose, I fired. I did not have any intimation that I would come within five feet of it until Toby, good dog that he was, brought the bird to me. That was a proud moment for me, as this was my first quail.

Just then Dad called out that Toby had another point, and this time Bud got a chance to show his skill; he was not equal to the occasion, however, and Dad brought down the brown beauty with his second barrel. Now we were all anxious to get a rabbit, and as we were crossing the creek, one was started from under a brush pile. This time Bud got a kill, and Dad said it was one of the prettiest shots he had ever seen. Bud was more astonished than I. He attributed his achievement to luck.

It was beginning to snow, and this made the fun all the merrier from our point of view, but Dad said this would end our quail shooting and he generally knows what he is talking about. His conclusion proved to be correct, for we saw no more quail that day.

It was about 11 o'clock when we started for the house, and on the way thither, Dad bowled over a fine rabbit that seemed to be going a mile a minute. When we reached the house the fire was still burning, and having replenished it, we warmed the coffee, and were soon sailing into the lunch we had taken with us. The luncheon hour is always one of the most pleasant ones of a day's hunt. Tired and hungry, we sat down and ate our plain fare with a relish, food that at any other time would hardly tempt us, and then talked of the sport we had en-

joyed. All these things go to make up a pleasant hour. After the meal was over, Dad filled his pipe, and while he courted "My Lady Nicotine," we placed the things in order and put more wood on the fire.

After our lunch and rest we donned our hunting coats, placed a few more shells in our pockets, and started out for the afternoon victims, if any should show themselves. This time we went out farther than in the morning. As we were traversing a gully bordered by trees, and very rocky, a rabbit jumped up from behind a huge boulder which Dad had passed by. I blazed away, and missed, having overshot him by four feet. Dad and Bud fired simultaneously, and the rabbit took two summersaults and lay still. I ran forward and was about to pick him up when the little demon jumped up and bolted like a shot out of a cannon. Bunny no doubt had been stunned for a moment, but it was evident that he had not been hit in the vital spot. We then continued down the valley and chased up two more rabbits, one of which was stopped by a shot from Dad's gun.

The scenery about us was most striking; the trees were all bare of leaves, while the white mantle sent from heaven and the sky, of a leaden cast, was still sending down the frozen

moisture. We were thus admiring Nature's panorama when two rabbits started up from under cover of ragweed. I stopped one of them, much to my delight and surprise; the other fell a victim of Dad's gun. And so we put in the afternoon. Despite the fact that game was not so plentiful, we enjoyed the hours as they passed, which, after all, is the best part of an outing.

Towards four o'clock it stopped snowing, and the white hills and the snow-laden trees contrasted beautifully with the dull, leaden color of the December sky. Twilight was now rapidy advancing, which warned us to start back to the house and prepare for home. On the way back Bud had another opportunity and killed a big rabbit which jumped under his feet. This put him in high glee, for it was his second. When we arrived at the house we extinguished the fire, cleaned our guns, and were then ready to start for town. We reached the traction at York at about 5 o'clock, and by 6 were enjoying a good, warm dinner at home. Our first experience with shotguns will always remain among the most pleasant memories of the past.

"Like some lorn abbey now, the wood
Stands roofless in the bitter air;
In ruins on its floor is strewed
The carven foliage quaint and rare,
And homeless winds complain along
The columned choir once thrilled with song."

Lowell.



"Do you ne'er think what wondrous beings these?
Do you ne'er think who made them, and who taught
The dialect they speak, where melodies
Alone are the interpreter of thought?
Whose household words are songs in many keys,
Sweeter than instrument of man e'er taught!"

Longfellow.

THE END.

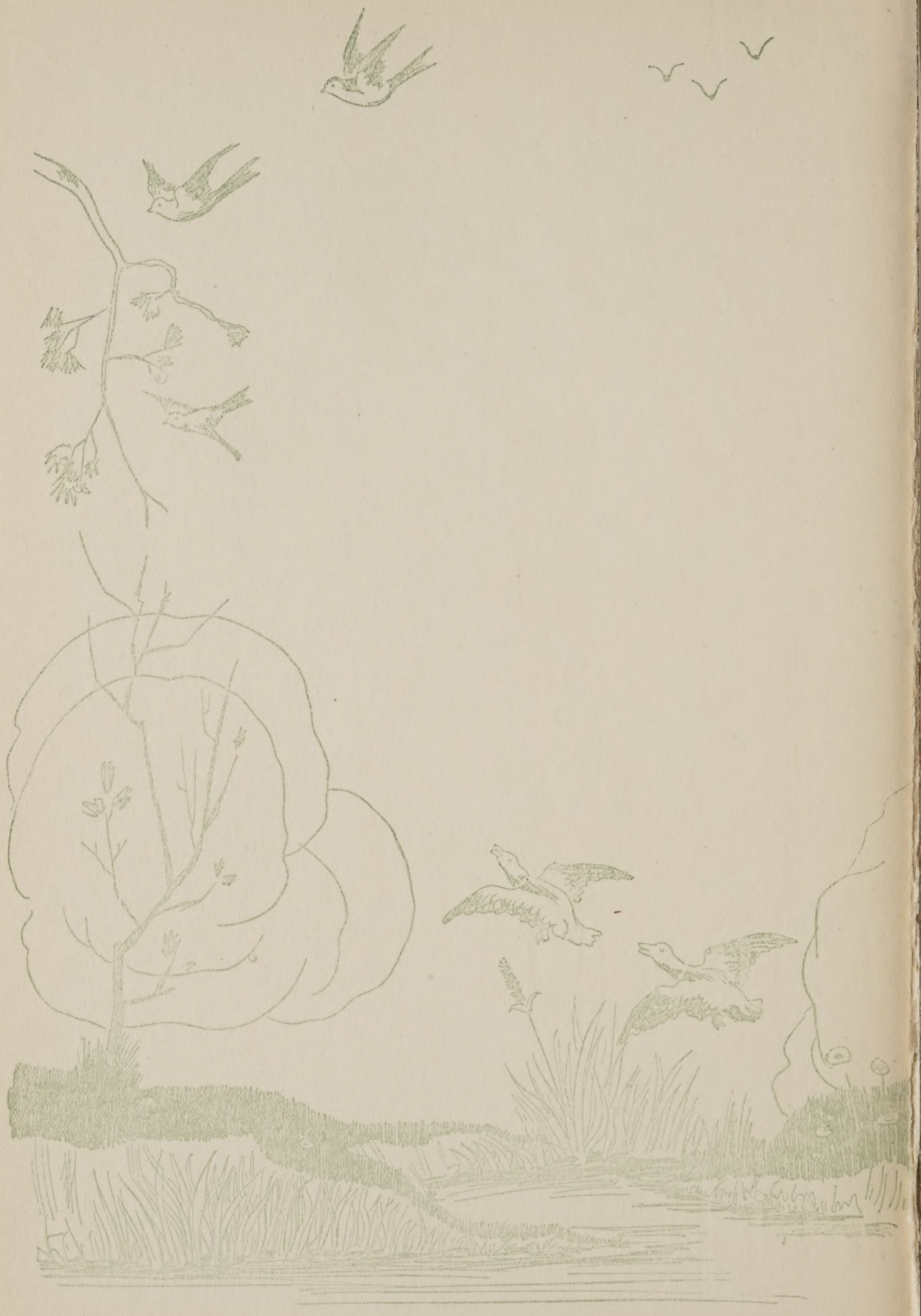


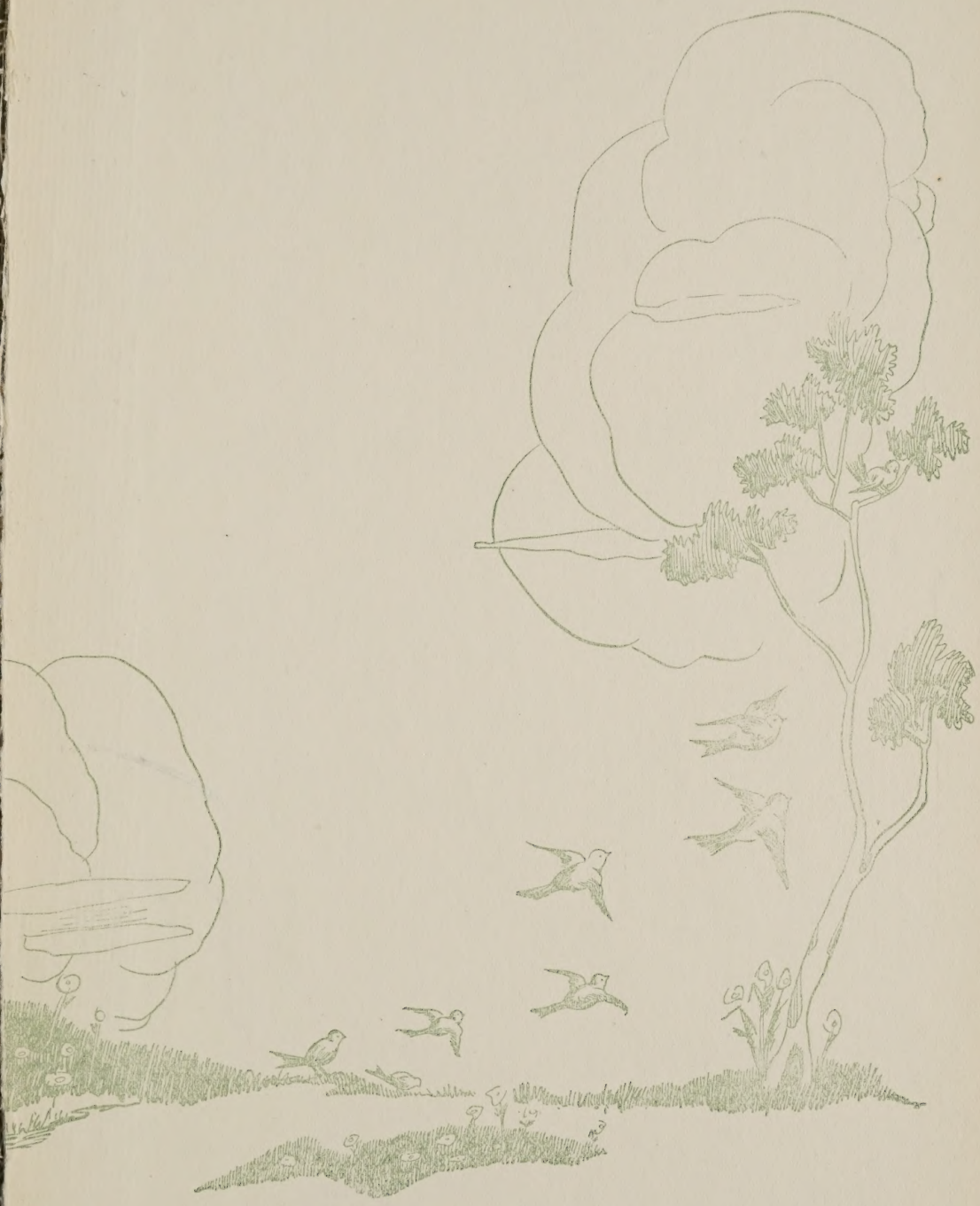












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